Rugby Union Five Nations Championship: Wales 14 Scotland 16

Scots knocking on the Slam door

Robert Armstrong in Cardiff

NO ONE should be misled by Scotland's public breastbeating about their perceived shortcomings after an agonisingly narrow victory over Wales. Rob Wainwright's all-conquering side are poised to complete a Grand Slam at England's expense at Murrayfield on Saturday week because they have the ability to tread the tightrope between rock solid defence and brilliantly improvised attack.

England, whose morale has been deeply dented by Jack Rowell's fatuous selections, are desperate to emulate the subtle Scottish blend of organisation and flair that added a Welsh scalp to those of France and Ireland. Scotland will need no motivating as they tilt at a third Slam in 12 years but Will Carling's men have a manager they no longer want to play for and an everchanging game plan they barely understand.

Certainly the Wales captain Jonathan Humphreys showed no hesitation in installing the Scots as favourites after sharing in his country's seventh successive championship defeat. "I'll go with Scotland," he said. "They've got a side that believe in themselves. I'm not sure England believe in what they're trying to do."

Never a man to tempt fate with a confident forecast, Jim Telfer, the SRU director of rugby, chose to praise the Auld Enemy despite their obvious signs of disarray. "England have the strongest group of players in the northern hemisphere. You never beat England easily and you always have to play well.

On Wednesday Scotland are likely to announce an unchanged side, perhaps allowing the Melrose wing Logan, who replaced the injured Joiner before half-time, to remain in the team.

If the huge popularity north of the border of pro-nationalist movies like Rob Roy and Mel Gibson's Braveheart proves an accurate guide, then England can expect a vitriolic reception that will put 1984 and 1990 in the shade. As Gavin Hastings, who knows a thing or two about Slams, remarked: "The next two weeks will be absolute mayhem in Scotland. Heaven knows why these Grand Slams always seem to come down to a match against England."

However, the cold logic of the scoring pattern at Cardiff shows that for most of the time Scotland were in the driving seat: three times they took the lead and twice Wales clawed their way back, only to fail in the closing stages. In the first half Wales did lead 6-3 — but only for 65 seconds until Dods landed the second of his three penalty goals.

Wainwright's stout-hearted team emphasise the golden rule of modern Test rugby, that the great majority of closely contested matches are ultimately won by dreadnought defences. Wales huffed and puffed powerfully and sometimes moved with no little flair. Yet it took them 79 minutes to cross the Scottish line, through Proctor, for the first and only time.

Of course, statistics can offer few clues to the passion and commitment which made the game one of the most memorable at the Arms Park during the nineties. Both sets of half-backs gave exhilarating if uneven performances, with Howley and Arwel Thomas just shading their opposite numbers until Townsend, with seven minutes left, redeemed his wayward line-kicking with what proved to be the match-winning try.

Wales deserved admiration, not least because their forwards, splendidly led by Humphreys, attempted to play a more technically fluent game than their predatory, streetwise opponents. But Scotland have evolved a quick, economical style that enables them to counter-attack with remarkable directness.

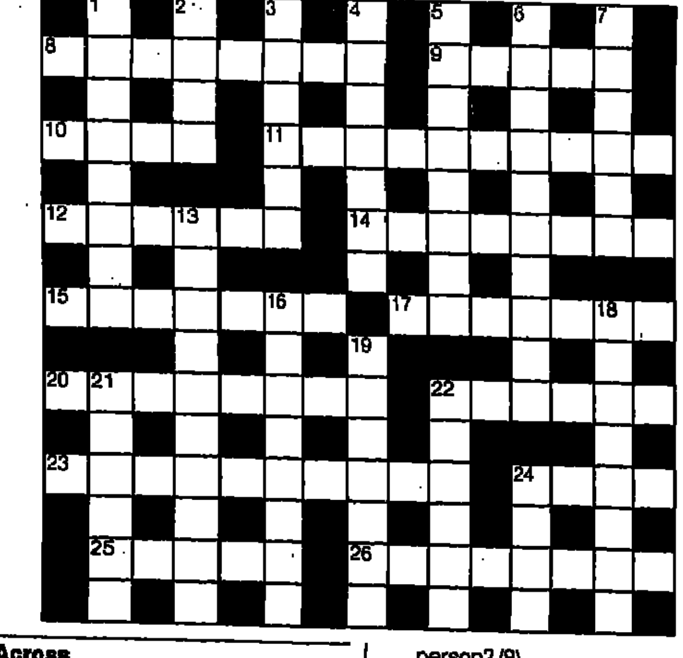
It is true, as Telfer suggested, that Scotland "at times played second fiddle" but that fiddle remained in measured control, particularly in the back row where Wainwright and the underrated Smith often secured ball to which they had no right.

Scotland's ability to absorb pressure for lengthy periods and still get the scores that win matches will give England much to analyse at Carling's team meetings, even if they have had six successive wins over the Scots since that day in 1990.



Gregor Townsend scores the winning try for Scotland at the Arms Park PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GIBSON

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

8 Sweeper holds everything for 22 across (8)
9,25 Summit approaching the infinite, on English soil? (5,5)
10,24 Enterprising person takes wrong view in currency (4,4)
11 26-12 25, 2 15, 9 10: British fish in cabbage (6,4)
12 See 26
14 Objective, to be removed to a solitary house? (8)
15 14 feet from a left turn, possibly (7)
17 Wax it enthusiastically (7)
20 Item of gold for a conscientious person? (8)
22 End car pollution — moving subject (6)
23,24 Choose characters for rail crew: I need 11 (10,4)
25 See 9
26,12 Chartreuses endanger work: cry with pain? (5,3,6)

Down

1 Tuner skilled with crystal ball? (5,3)
2 Depressed? Spend! (4)
3 Doctors are intimidating to capital (6)
4 I get election winner, with deposit, to yield to outside pressure (7)
5 Revised by Plutarch, losing companion all of a sudden (8)
6 Amalgam: one part tin, one part nitrogen, three parts carbon monoxide (10)
7 Old-fashioned gesture revealing the anxious (2,4)
13 Eccentric character prefacing a communication or two (6-4)
16 An old note by a small boy with absolute power (8)
18 Bombast from Welsh or Scottish mouth is uncharacteristic (8)
19 "Silver in Respite", work of Van Meegeren or Keating (7)
21 Speculation about everything for 22 across (6)
22 Left first of chairs in two-piece sweet (6)
24 Decline of article in the Guardian (4)

Last week's solution

DOLLOPS SPINACH
U I O A R I R
STAG PADDINGTON
L H U V C H W
PISTIL EVENTIDE
N A R S M E
PERFORATE RAIDS
O I R
THROW USHERETTE
E L H E L E
BATHROOM ENCORE
T A A E M R R
SHORTRANGE AWAY
E D D T N T C
GREYEST STREWED

France 45 Ireland 10

France finish on a high

Ian Borthwick in Paris

FRANCE's captain Philippe Saint-André may not be the world's greatest leader on the field but he certainly has an inimitable way of talking to his team that leaves no margin for error. With French rugby currently rocked by the scandal of the number of First Division players tested positive for cannabis, Saint-André asked his team before the match to "dope themselves with simplicity" and that is exactly what they did in annihilating the Irish.

Their discipline and concentration never wavered in the face of Irish provocation. If the fluidity of their passing, the pace of their backs and the ever-present support of the ball-carrier was a delight to the eye, the efficiency with which the forwards produced clean possession was the key to this success.

Despite the numerous changes to the team after the defeat by Scotland, the new-look Tricolors not only ran in seven tries but also produced a couple of trump cards in young players having their first Test.

Richard Castel, the flanker who cannot hold down a place in his Toulouse club side, had a storming international debut, scoring two tries, while Stephane Glas, who came on as a replacement for Thierry Lacroix in the 22nd minute, was a constant danger with the ball in hand, splitting the Irish defence wide open with his combination of snappy side-steps and lightning acceleration through the gap.

The record-breaking 35-point victory was nevertheless no walkover, as the number of injured in the French camp can testify, and came only after 80 minutes of some of France's most applied and consistent rugby in several years. No doubt that is why the France coach Jean-Claude Skrela could not hide his disappointment at the realisation that they had let slip their chance for a Grand Slam two weeks ago in Scotland.

As for Ireland, who at least had the merit of remaining positive throughout the game, even the last-minute penalty try which Niall Hogan could justifiably call his as the battling scrum-half actually scored just as referee Ed Morrison blew the whistle, comes as little consolation.

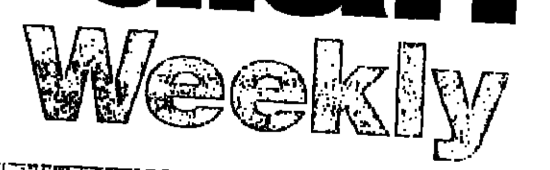
In 960 minutes of rugby at the Parc des Princes since they first played here in 1974, this was only the second time that Ireland had crossed the French line, and they can only hope that the pitch at Paris's new ground, Le Stade de France, will be more productive.

● Irish prop Peter Clohessy has been banned for 26 playing weeks for stamping on French lock Olivier during the match. Referee Ed Morrison missed the incident but it was picked up by television. Clohessy will miss Ireland's last two Five Nations matches and the beginning of next season.

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The Guardian



Vol 154, No 10
Week ending March 10, 1996

Peres declares war on Hamas terror

Derek Brown in Jerusalem and Jessica Berry in Tel Aviv

ISRAEL tore a gaping hole in its peace deal with the Palestinians, after Islamist fanatics dealt out mass murder for the fourth time in eight days with a suicide bomb in Tel Aviv which killed 12 civilians.

At an emergency session, the cabinet decided Israeli troops will be able to return to self-rule areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, controlled by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

The prime minister, Shimon Peres, said Israeli forces would strike at the Islamists anywhere. "We will go to any corner where this terror has taken root," he said.

The Israeli army forbade Palestinians to leave their towns or villages and banned Israelis from employing Palestinians. The restrictions seem certain to devastate the Palestinian economy.

The government has acted against a background of popular rage. An angry mob in Tel Aviv stoned cars outside the defence ministry on Monday night. They chanted "Death to the Arabs", and "We don't want peace, we want war".

But the Israeli move will gravely undermine the tottering credibility of the Palestinian Authority, and of its beleaguered president.

The deputy head of the Palestinian security forces said on Monday they had captured the mastermind of three of the last four suicide attacks. Mohammed Abu Wardeh, aged 28, was arrested in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

After a meeting with Mr Arafat, political leaders of Hamas appealed to their Qassam military wing to end its suicide bomb campaign. On Tuesday Qassam was reported to have ordered an end to bombings until July if Israel did not target its members.

The latest suicide bomb came outside the Dizengoff shopping centre in the heart of Tel Aviv. As well as the 12 dead, about 100 were wounded, some critically.

On Sunday, after the Jerusalem bus bombing which claimed 19 lives, Mr Peres had declared all-out war on the militants of Hamas.

At 3.56pm on Monday — the moment the public clock stopped — a man loitering outside the city's giant shopping centre detonated a powerful bomb. In an instant, the street resembled a battlefield.

Crumpled corpses were scattered around the junction of Dizengoff and King George Streets, among the busiest of thoroughfares in Israel's busiest city. Debris from shattered shop fronts rained on to mangled cars, as dazed and terrified shoppers ran helter-skelter from the scene. Within minutes the junction was crammed with police and wailing ambulances. And before any semblance of order was restored, Israel's television channels were on hand to broadcast live from the scene.

There were heartwrenching scenes of weeping children, some wearing fancy dress for the eve of the Purim festival. Israeli radio said the casualties included several children.

The Dizengoff blast raised the death toll in recent days to more than 60, including the suicide bombers. With evidence mounting that the military wing of Hamas is out of control, almost certainly fragmented into small, ruthless cells, the Israeli government is facing the disintegration of the peace process on which its future is staked.

Israel suspended negotiations with Syria as the US government called for a united effort by Israel and Arabs to shut down terrorist groups.

As the May 29 election nears, many observers believe the government's plight to be terminal. Since the first of the latest spate of Hamas bombings Mr Peres and the government have promised draconian measures. They have closed the borders with the Palestinian territories, destroyed the homes of two bombers, imposed curfews, and arrested dozens of men.

None of it has worked.

Bystanders rush to help those injured in Monday's suicide attack in Tel Aviv PHOTOGRAPH: MOTTI KIMCHI

Clinton plea, page 4

Tories attack Hong Kong visa-free plan

Guardian Reporters

JOHN MAJOR'S plans to give visa-free access to more than 2 million Hong Kong residents after the colony is handed over to China in 1997 were condemned by a group of rightwing backbenchers led by the former immigration minister Charles Wardle, who warned the change would lead to more illegal immigration and further pressure on Britain's social security budget.

Mr Wardle, in a direct criticism of Mr Major and the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, said anyone claiming the move would not increase the risk of immigration abuse was "talking through his head".

The new arrangements, set out by Mr Major in his two-day visit to Hong Kong at the weekend, will from next year allow 2.2 million Hong Kong Chinese to visit Britain for up to six months at a time without applying for a visa. There will be no limit to the frequency of visits, but the ban on work, study and access to social security benefits will be total.

The new arrangements apply to 900,000 people who had no travel documents, and 1.3 million who had nothing more than a certificate of identity showing their right of residence in Hong Kong itself.

As well as the visa concession, Mr Major also said Britain was prepared to "guarantee" rights of admission and settlement to around 7,000 Indians and Pakistanis living in Hong Kong, were they to come under pressure to leave the territory.

There was some disappointment that Mr Major had made no reference to the plight of the Vietnamese boat people in detention centres.

Focus on Hong Kong, page 12

Israelis want tears to match their own

COMMENT
Martin Woollacott

THE time has come again, as it did with Yitzhak Rabin's death, for a reckoning in Israel. But it is a hard one to make. The people are crying out for action, for change, for revenge, for a solution. The kind of solution they crave, however, does not exist.

They want to see Hamas destroyed, either by Israeli forces or by Arafat. They want Arafat to "deliver" with arrests, patrols, battles in the streets. And they want a change of dramatic proportions in the minds of Arabs. They want tears to match their own. They ask where are the peace rallies in the West Bank, where the peace ribbons?

Could this be the moment when because what is called "peace" is so desperately unsatisfactory, there will be a return to what is called "war"? A Likud victory in the elections in May, with the Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, telling the Palestinians, as he has promised, "Forget about a state"? Israeli military incursions into the supposedly autonomous territories? A wall of wire and fixed-fire machine-guns between Israelis and Palestinians? The fall of Arafat, or his becoming a complete Israeli puppet? The transformation of Hamas from a minority movement into the main resistance to the Israelis? These are disastrous possibilities, and most Israelis, in their hearts, know it.

Israelis are an emotional people. They are also a lonely people, preoccupied with themselves. They ask too much of the world they helped create. Arafat has not been brave enough to tackle Hamas head-on — but it is because he is a wily procrastinator that he has survived and Israel has been able to deal with him. The efficient PLO military chiefs who could have taken the right decisions are no longer with us: Israel killed them years ago, an illustration of the truism that what you need in peace you often destroy in war.

The schisms within Hamas which make it so difficult to get the bombers may be, in part, a product of Israeli delays and confusions. Israel half wanted to see Hamas choose a political path, to have it come in from the cold, and half wanted to extirpate it. Not much was on offer politically, though, and what was on offer was accompanied by continuing military action, as with the assassination of Hamas's chief bomb maker. That was a recipe for fragmentation. It is speculation, but it may well have contributed to the disunity in the Hamas ranks which seems to be one of the reasons for this terrible campaign.

There is a tariff in bombs and lives, a point at which deaths pass the point where they can be counted up as the "price for peace". The mood of Israelis, so purged and elevated by Rabin's assassination, has shifted again. There must be action. The chances are that it will be less than wholly effective. There must also be reflection before the election, for the danger is that, in finding one kind of price too high to pay, Israelis will blunder into paying another, which will be higher still.

David Hirst, page 13

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Did American dollars help kill peace in Ireland?

LESS THAN two months ago, we received a card from Catholic friends in Belfast wishing us a "happy Christmas from peaceful, beautiful Ireland". You could hear the delight in their voices through the words on the page. We'd also heard from both Protestant and Catholic friends that tourism was booming, Catholics were visiting Protestant areas and vice versa, unemployment was dropping dramatically, and Southerners were crossing the border to visit the North for the first time in 20 years.

Then we heard of the IRA's London bombing, which occurred less than one hour after the IRA suddenly released a statement saying that "the cessation of military operations has ended". We saw Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Fein (the political wing of the IRA), on television saying, in refusing a request to condemn this bombing, that he had not been communicating with the IRA. This sounded unlikely. And a little research revealed he'd contacted the White House shortly before the bombing and said that he was hearing "very disturbing news" and would call back later.

When Mr Adams came to the US last year, Sinn Fein was given permission to open a political office in Washington despite the IRA's refusal to give up its arms. Over $1 million has been collected so far. Did that money help finance this bombing in which two innocent people were killed and dozens injured?

So much for "peaceful, beautiful Ireland". This could well be the end of the peace process itself. And if it is, was the ending financed in part by American dollars?
Eileen A Hutchinson,
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

I AM ONE of the Northern Ireland "bigots" to whom Ken Jones (February 25) feels he owes nothing. My ancestors moved to Northern Ireland in the 1600s at the behest of the British crown. They moved from the lowlands of Scotland and from the North of England. I was born British in the United Kingdom, of British ancestry. During the second world war, my father served in the RAF and my mother was a nurse in London. After one bomb raid, she was buried in rubble and had to be dug out. My parents did not consider the south of England to be a region of the UK to which they owed nothing.

I vote in elections for the Ulster Unionist party because I feel they best represent my interests. I expect them to represent my interests in Parliament, and when they do I consider that to be democracy. I do not consider it to be extortion. I support minority rights, but I also support majority rights. I do not accept that two nations cannot share a single island; in fact, I find this argument to be stupid.

I am sorry that Mr Jones's house was shaken by an IRA bomb. I can assure him that neither I nor any of my Northern Irish "bigot" friends have ever placed a bomb in London, or anywhere else for that matter. I would suggest that he focus his anger on those responsible for the bomb — the IRA. Neither the Ulster Unionists nor the British government have placed any obstacles in the way of peace. The sole obstacle is the refusal of the IRA to stop committing murder. Neither history, politics nor religion justifies their acts of murder. The second they stop committing murder there will be peace.
William Stewart,
New Hampshire, USA

THE LONDON Docklands bomb will be seen as the last nail in the coffin of IRA-republicanism, just as the attempted coup in Moscow in August 1991 spelt the end of Soviet communism. The IRA is essentially irrelevant to the politics of Ireland, north and south. It cannot achieve its objectives with the gun, and it cannot achieve them without the gun.

The only way that Sinn Fein republicanism can now survive is to detach itself from IRA-republicanism and get on with the democratic political process in Northern Ireland. This would be the true test of Mr Adams's statesmanship and political acumen, rather than his preference for strutting before gullible congressmen in Washington.
Kenneth W Matthews,
School of International Studies and Law, Coventry University

Ministers too clever by half

THE POSITION of the Government with regard to the Scott report was described by Descartes: "Although the ability to deceive may perhaps be regarded among us men as a sign of intelligence, the will to deceive must undoubtedly always come from malice, or from fear and weakness" (Principles Of Philosophy, I xxix). How many times have we heard political commentators describe certain politicians as "clever", when what seems to be meant is that they lie fluently?

In an interview on BBC Radio 4 on the morning after the Commons debate, Michael Heseltine concluded proudly by saying "we have won the argument". Apart from the fact that the Government had won the vote but not the argument, this is one of the main problems that worried Socrates about the sophists and the statesmen of Athens — namely, that they were aiming at winning arguments and not at achieving the truth. Of course, Heseltine was as usual saying what he knew to be false — but that hardly improves matters, though it no doubt earns him the title "clever".
(Dr) Peter J King,
St Hilda's College, Oxford
(Dr) Andrea Christofidou,
Worcester College, Oxford

I FOUND the use of the expression "presentational difficulties" highlighted in Geoffrey Robertson's article on the Scott report (February 18) particularly chilling. My brother was killed at Lockerbie in December 1988 and it occurs to me that there may well be other issues that Her Majesty's Government could have "presentational difficulties" with.

If, for example, they had known that planes carrying drugs in the arms-for-hostages deals were landing and taking off from Heathrow, they might have judged it to be in the British public's interest not to make this known.

Moreover, if the 270 people slaughtered at Lockerbie had knowingly been sacrificed or allowed to die in order to appease Iran in the wake of the June 1988 downing of an Iranian passenger plane and to secure Iran's support in the coming war against Iraq, then I imagine that the Government would prefer to keep that hidden, too.

I am not saying that either of these nightmare scenarios is in fact what happened, but relatives will be left in torturing doubt as long as the Government refuses to hold an inquiry into its conduct and as long as it continues to show so little determination to end the deadlock over bringing the Libyan suspects to trial.
Marion Cadman,
L'Aquila, Italy

Milford Haven poorly served

FORTY years ago I did a large part of my military service on a coal burning boom defence vessel (HMS Barrage) that operated out of Pembroke dock, a base we shared with two ocean-going tugs, the Empire Rosa and the Empire Neta. Very occasionally, when one or other of these two was absent, we would accompany the remaining sister ship on tug duty along the West Wales coast.

In those days, Milford Haven was a quiet little fishing port at which we used to take on coal, the main items of maritime interest being the fishing fleet itself at Milford and a half dozen or so Sunderland flying boats riding the swell of the dock.

Today, with far bigger tankers and Milford now a major oil terminal threatening hundreds of miles of precious coast, we are told that there were only port tugs available to attend the stricken Russian tanker. Can this be yet one more consequence of public sector cuts in the "fight against inflation" or downsizing to maximise profit for the "more efficient" private sector?
Gwyn Williams,
Estelí, Nicaragua

IN ONE of the most recent spills in Ogoni, Nigeria, oil leaked from a Shell flowline for 40 days between July and August 1993 without repair, further contaminating Ogoni farmland. Shell argued that its engineers were unable to get into the area to repair the pipeline for fear of violence.

According to an independent record of Shell's spills from 1982 to 1992, 1,626,000 gallons were spilt from the company's Nigerian operations in 27 separate incidents. Of the total number of spills recorded from Shell — a company which operates in more than 100 countries — 40 per cent were in Nigeria. And you think we in Britain have a problem.
Matthew Oglethorpe,
Derby

Religion in the classroom

STUART DABBS (February 18) rightly argues that it is not the business of the state to instruct children in any one religion. However, it is the business of the state to educate children in the religions of their country and the rest of the world.

How can children understand their own culture if they don't understand religion? How can racism and other forms of prejudice be prevented if your children are ignorant of the beliefs and practices of others? How can we have good international relations if we don't understand the religions which underpin cultures foreign to our own?

We can't avoid religion in the modern world. Many people are religious, and not to educate our children in those beliefs and practices would be as scandalous as it was for the Church to repress scientific progress.
Robert Bowle,
Toyama ken, Japan

Briefly

STEWART MacGIBBON (A Country Diary, February 11) will have to spend much longer in New Zealand. He could then observe that the fruiting cycle of the nikau, New Zealand's only native palm, is far from rapid, as he claims.

After flowering in summer (December to February), tiny fruit are set which take at least a year to develop into those "deep-green nubbins". These continue to develop for another year and only ripen the following summer. Around each palm stem one sees evidence of all phases of development — flowers, developing fruit, nubbins, ripe fruit, old dead spike and a swelling under the leaf bract where next year's flowers are forming.

This has been a long, hot summer which, after a cold, wet season last year, has had a spectacular effect. Many of the palms in the Waitakere hills bore two spikes of ripened fruit and are now producing a second, or even third, set of flowers.
Claudia Turner,
Titirangi, New Zealand

THE IRRIGATION of semi-arid land causes salinity to increase, not by lowering water tables, but by raising them (Letter from Australia, February 25), thereby bringing dissolved salts into contact with plant root systems and eventually the land surface, where evaporation fails to remove the salt which accumulates as a result.

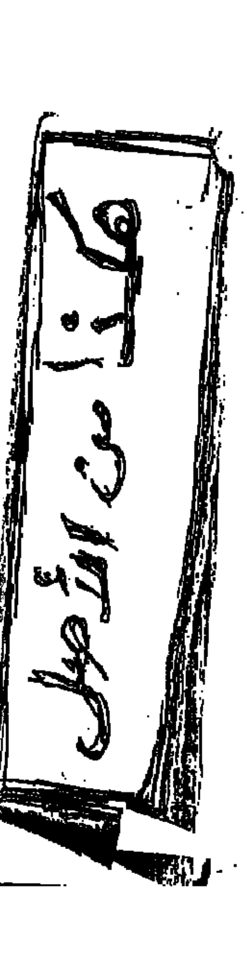
If trees, nature's water pumps, are removed and land levelled to enable cultivation to occur, this will exacerbate the process of salination, as has occurred with devastating effect in areas such as the Murray river in Australia.
(Dr) Steve Dinham,
University of Western Sydney,
Nepean, Australia

I AM criticised by Mr Chapman (February 18) for mentioning seven states in the Commonwealth of Australia. I was, as Mr Chapman must have realised, including the Northern Territory which, some years ago, acquired a state legislature which, I remember clearly, was officially opened by the then Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowan. Whatever legal complexities may still mark some constitutional difference, in the light of this very large territory acquiring its own elected assembly it seemed only courteous to include it in the list of Australian states.
Roger Milton,
Raglan, NSW, Australia

I NEVER knew it was the House of Lords that stood between me and chaos, but Brian Mawhinney tells me that this is so. I shall go back to Australia immediately. Life is much safer there.
(Dr) Dorothy Rowe,
Highbury Grove, London

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Australians vote to oust Keating

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

AUSTRALIA'S hopes of becoming a republic by 2000 were upset at the weekend when the Labor government was swept out of power after 13 years.

The prime minister Paul Keating's plans to lead Labor to a sixth term were wiped out after just 90 minutes of counting showed a swing of almost 6 per cent to the conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition.

Mr Keating's defeat signals uncertainty over the future of Australia's economic and cultural push into Asia, and the implementation of controversial aboriginal land title laws.

Trade unions warned the prime minister-elect, John Winston Howard, that the agreement which had guaranteed industrial peace during Labor's tenure was dead.

Mr Howard, for his part, on Monday warned the trade unions that he had been given an emphatic and unambiguous mandate to change the country after 13 years of Labor rule. The Liberal leader, buoyed by his landslide victory, said the new government's first action would be industrial relations reform. He also said helping small business and reducing youth unemployment would be at the top of his agenda after he is sworn in this week.



Howard: strong mandate

While Mr Howard said he would continue the former government's programme of reconciliation with the Aborigines, there was little mention of the move into Asia and of republicanism, which were trademarks of the Keating years.

His first battle with the unions is already brewing over plans to privatise one-third of the telecommunications giant Telstra to pay for his environmental package.

Many Labor supporters were still in shock after one of the worst routs in the country's 95-year federal history.

A former Labor prime minister, Bob Hawke, who led the party to four election wins, said it was the end of an era. Referring to Mr Keating, he said: "His problem has been one of remoteness, aloofness, arrogance."

More than a third of Labor's MPs and cabinet ministers lost their seats as floating voters decided the time was right for a change.

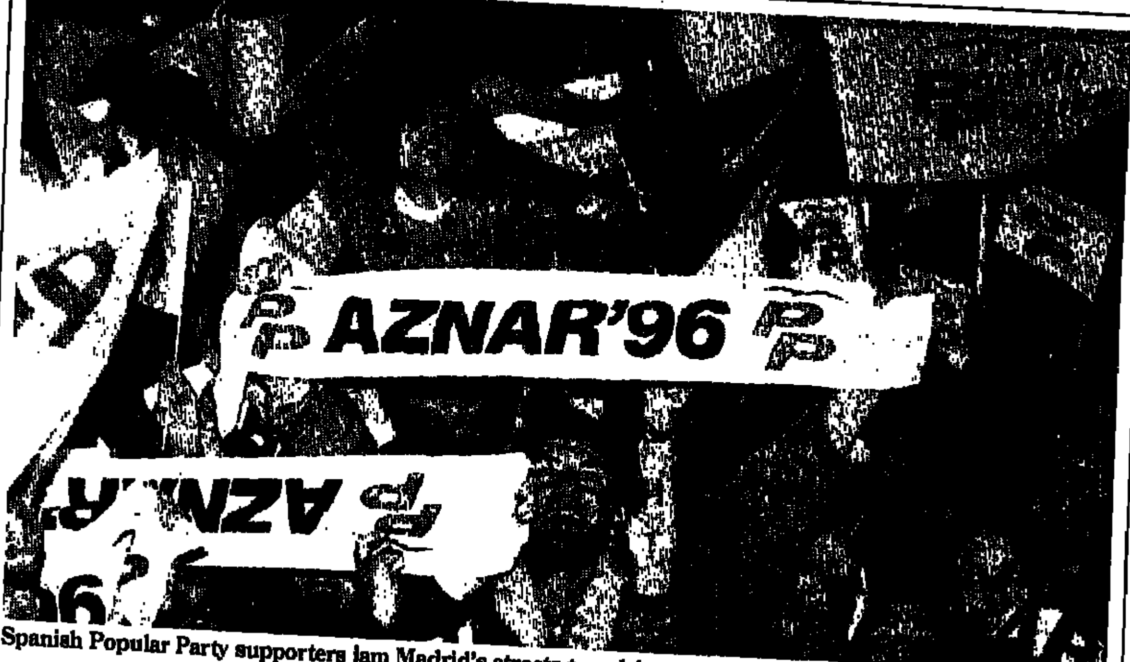
But an expelled Labor renegade, Graeme Campbell, was returned to Kalgoorlie as an independent with an increased majority. Summing up the mood of many observers, the outback MP said: "I don't believe people were voting for the Liberal Party, I believe they were voting against Paul Keating."

It was a serious reversal of fortune for Labor. In the 1980s, it held power in most states. Now New South Wales is its sole remaining stronghold.

With nearly all the votes counted, the coalition has 95 seats — a 48-seat majority over Labor — in the 148-seat House of Representatives in Canberra. Only one seat is still in doubt, that of Kim Beazley, the anointed successor to Mr Keating. The outcome will depend on postal votes.

The majority gives Mr Howard, aged 56, a powerful mandate for his radical reforms in the areas of tax, industrial relations and privatisation. The republic, a key personal initiative of Mr Keating, is already on the back burner. Mr Howard is an avowed constitutional monarchist.

Comment, page 13



Spanish Popular Party supporters jam Madrid's streets to celebrate their victory PHOTOGRAPH: JAVIER BAULUZ

Spanish electors tilt to the right

John Hooper and Adela Gooch in Madrid

SPAIN'S VOTERS on Sunday gave the right a much narrower victory than predicted and handed the balance of power to regional nationalists.

The conservative Popular Party (PP) won 156 seats in the key, lower house of the Cortes (parliament) — 15 more than the governing Socialists, but still 20 short of an outright majority. The gap between the two parties' shares of the vote was just 1.5 per cent.

The election winner, José Maria Aznar, the PP leader, had a first taste of the problems he will face in forming a government when the Catalan nationalists who now hold the balance of power declared they would deny him support.

He admitted: "The situation is difficult," but added, "I will do everything in my power to get a stable government."

The Socialist prime minister, Felipe González, on Monday made it clear he was ready to step into the breach should Mr Aznar fail. Mr González said it would be difficult — but not impossible — to reach an understanding with the communist-led United Left. He told a press conference the left had won 49 per cent of the vote, compared with only 39 per cent for the PP and its closest allies.

As analysts speculated about a possible "Italianisation" of Spanish politics, the country's stock exchanges were being rocked by some of their biggest losses. The Madrid Bolsa's general index plunged 16.84 points to end Monday almost 5 per cent lower.

Basque terrorists were quick to exploit the prospect of instability. An officer of the Basque country's regional police force died after a bomb planted under his car exploded in the town of Irun near the French border.

There are 350 places in the Congress of Deputies, but two deputies chosen to represent Herri Batasuna, the electoral front of the Basque separatist organisation ETA, are not expected to take their seats.

Mr Aznar could enjoy an outright majority with the support of the two-party Catalan nationalist alliance, Convergence and Union, and the centre-right Canary Islands Coalition (CC).

A prominent CC official said the party was ready to do a deal with the conservatives. But one of the leaders of the Catalan alliance, Pere Esteve, said he could not even foresee negotiations with the PP. He described the PP's views on Catalonia as "unacceptable".

On Monday, Catalan nationalist sources said Convergence and Union would propose to the Socialists that both groups abstain when Mr Aznar seeks a vote of confidence in parliament. Although Convergence and Union is to the right of the centre, its hopes of a quasi-federal Spain clash with the PP's traditional centralism.

Under the Spanish constitution, if the prime minister designate fails to win an absolute majority in parliament at the first try, he can make a further attempt within two days. At the second try, he is required only to secure more Yes votes than No votes.

However, there is some doubt as to whether Mr Aznar can achieve even that. If Convergence and Union were to abstain, and the left were to vote solidly against him, the left could force a draw with the PP and its natural allies at 166 seats each.

● Spain's paramilitary civil guard tortures suspected Basque ETA separatists, a Council of Europe expert committee charged in a report released this week.

Comment, page 13

Turkish rivals form secular coalition

Chris Nuttall in Ankara

TURKEY'S two main secular parties formed a historic coalition at the weekend to deny power to the pro-Islamic Welfare Party.

A coalition protocol was signed by the leader of the True Path Party, Tansu Ciller, and her counterpart in the Motherland Party, Mesut Yilmaz. It came exactly 10 weeks after they were runners-up to Welfare in the general election.

Mrs Ciller said she was making a sacrifice in reaching an agreement with her rival for leadership of the centre-right. "I am doing this because I don't believe Welfare coming to power is good for Turkey," she said, "especially with its very different ideas on how to rule the state."

To keep the two leaders from tearing the coalition apart with their squabbling, Mrs Ciller is expected to retire to the backbenches until the end of the year.

Mr Yilmaz said that Turkey will rotate the prime minister's office for the first time. He will occupy the post first and Mrs Ciller will succeed him in 1997, before handing the post back in 1999. Negotiations between them broke down twice over who would be prime minister first.

Motherland and the True Path have fought for the centre ground since they were founded, after the 1980 military coup, by the late Turgut Ozal and the president, Suleyman Demirel. Both are pro-Western centre-right parties with similar programmes, but they have been rivals because of personality clashes between their leaders. They have been brought together by the first election victory of an Islamic party in the 73-year history of the secular republic.

Welfare fell well short of an overall majority in parliament, but seemed close to forming a government with Motherland last month. Enormous pressure from the secular establishment contributed to the breakdown of the talks and the revival of centre-right negotiations.

Welfare had promised to redirect the country towards the Islamic world and traditional values. The new coalition aims to strengthen ties with the West and continue a programme of economic liberalisation.

It will be a minority government, 15 seats short of an overall majority. But the leader of the Democratic Left Party, Bulent Ecevit, has promised his 75 MPs will abstain when Mr Yilmaz seeks an initial vote of confidence.

Western governments and investors will breathe more easily with Welfare excluded from power. It had threatened to re-negotiate a trade deal with the European Union and reassess Turkey's Nato membership. It could still force the removal of British, French and American forces from their base in southern Turkey at the end of the month when the mandate for Operation Provide Comfort, supporting the Kurds of northern Iraq, expires.

MPs from secular parties are threatening to join Welfare in voting against its renewal.

Asia's wake-up call to Europe

Deborah Charles in Bangkok

A LANDMARK summit of Asian and European leaders is not expected to bring an immediate flurry of new business to Asia but served as a wake-up call to European firms about opportunities, analysts said on Monday.

Leaders from the 15-member European Union and 10 Asian nations met for the two-day summit last week, which emphasised the need to forge stronger economic ties between the regions. In particular, the leaders stressed their desire to increase two-way investment and to liberalise and facilitate trade.

The EU says half the growth in global trade from now until 2000 will be generated from the vibrant tigers of East and south-east Asia, and it wants to reap the benefits.

Newspaper editorials across Asia said the summit had laid the foundation for greater trade and investment ties based on mutual respect which had pushed for the summit, appeared to have got what it wanted — respect and recognition of its world role. It also managed to sideline sensitive issues such as human rights, labour laws and democracy to ensure that talks remained focused on boosting business.

A final statement issued at the end of the summit called for increased two-way investment and trade liberalisation. It also set out concrete steps to be taken to develop the new relationship.

The communiqué contained both a commitment to promote human rights and a promise not to interfere in each other's internal affairs — and established that two regions with a long colonial history would deal with each other on the basis of equality.

That formula was designed to satisfy Western pressure groups by mentioning rights while placating the Asians, who insist on their right to conduct their affairs in line with

The Week

NEARLY 60,000 people attended a memorial service in Miami's Orange Bowl stadium for the four Cuban-American pilots who lost their lives in an attack by Cuban air force MiGs.
Washington Post, page 16

GERMANY'S spy chief, Konrad Porzner, has resigned, the chief casualty in a scandal in which Britain's MI6 is believed to have lost tens of thousands of pounds and has had to withdraw one of its agents from Germany.

TWO men, Mallanson Harris, aged 23, and Marvin Joseph, aged 22, were sentenced to hang after a jury in Antigua found them guilty of murdering two British yacht crew and an American couple.

DANIEL CHIPENDA, who played a key role in Angola's struggle for liberation from Portugal, has died, aged 64.

MARGUERITE DURAS, internationally recognised as one of the most original writers this century, has died in Paris, aged 81.
Obituary, page 24

INDIA'S corruption scandal spun beyond the control of the prime minister, P V Narasimha Rao, as a special court ordered the arrest of 10 politicians, including former ministers.

THE WORST snow storms for a century are endangering the lives of tens of thousands of Tibetan nomads by devastating the herds of yak and sheep they depend upon for food, clothing and fuel.

TWENTY million people in Nigeria are estimated to be at risk from an outbreak of spinal meningitis that is reported to have claimed thousands of lives. Foreign relief agencies are flying million vaccines into the country in an effort to contain the epidemic.

PRESIDENT Nelson Mandela has been admitted to hospital in South Africa for tests aimed at ending speculation that his health is declining.

CHINA has announced that it is to begin a new round of missile-launch exercises this week off its coast, near Taiwan.

AT LEAST nine people were killed and 61 injured after 120 vehicles ploughed into each other in thick fog on a Belgian motorway.

THE Bordeaux wine industry said it had been severely hit by boycotts in protest against French nuclear tests in the South Pacific and that it would take several years to repair the damage.



Pilgrims' progress . . . Thousands of Muslims return home on a crowded train crossing a bridge at Gazipur, near Dhaka, after an Islamic festival
PHOTOGRAPH PAVEL RAHMAN

Iran opposition quits poll

Kathy Evans in Tehran

IRAN'S only opposition party, the Iran Freedom Movement, will boycott this week's general election because the government has effectively refused to allow it to campaign, its leader, Dr Ebrahim Yazdi, said. He said the interior ministry had banned its rallies and newspapers had rejected election advertisements.

The party and its coalition partners had submitted 15 candidates for election, but only four of them passed a vetting process by the clergy-based Guardian Council, which checked all contenders for their Islamic beliefs. Dr Yazdi was among those rejected.

The party is the only one inside Iran to declare publicly its opposition to absolute clerical rule. Its decision to boycott the election could depress voter turnout.

The Guardian Council announced at the weekend that a number of Iranian officials had been arrested for using government facilities to support election candidates, but gave no further details.

Iranian voters lost all chance of a meaningful poll last week when a council of senior clerics and legal experts rejected more than a third of the candidates offering themselves for election.

According to the traditions of Iran's Islamic democracy, all candidates for seats in the Majlis have to be assessed for their Islamic credentials by the Guardian Council before being allowed to stand for election.

Last week the council gave its verdict on the 5,300 candidates who came forward for the 270 seats. In Tehran's constituencies, only 421 out of 900 hopefuls survived the process. The council does not have to give reasons to the candidates, let alone the public, for its decisions, but most observers said that liberal and moderate figures failed to get through. Many of those accepted are members of the outgoing parliament.

Dr Yazdi said the rejections meant that the elections would be "undemocratic, unhealthy and unfree". "This is not a legal decision but a political one," he declared. "But it does not negate our belief that political liberalism is coming bit by bit. They feel the need for an opposition but seem unwilling to pay the price."

Ostensibly, the only requirements for becoming an electoral candidate in Iran are to be aged between 30 and 75, have no criminal record and be a good Muslim. Entrants must also believe that Iran's spiritual leadership by the clerics is divine and cannot be challenged.

This key concept, from which the clerics derive their power, is increasingly being questioned in religious, political and academic circles.

The Iran Freedom Movement is the only party to have publicly declared its opposition to the absolute power of the clerics. Dr Yazdi said the people of Iran wanted an Islamic republic, not a government of the clergy.

The forthcoming elections seem to have brought an unprecedented climate of debate.

Three months ago President Hashemi Rafsanjani signalled his support for a pluralist system, but as yet no political parties have been authorised by the government. Instead, each political grouping has announced which candidates support it.

The election campaign officially kicked off last week, but promises little razzmatazz. The election authorities have banned rallies and motor processions and announced that all advertisements must first be approved by the ministry of Islamic guidance.

US tries to save peace in Mideast

Martin Walker in Washington

THE United States president, Bill Clinton, this week urged Israeli and Palestinian moderates to make common cause against the latest wave of terror bombings and forge a coalition for peace against extremists on both sides, in an effort to save the Middle East peace process and his own peacemaking reputation.

"If you fight for peace, we will stand with you," Mr Clinton said. He reaffirmed US determination "to do all we can to stop the killing, to bring the killers to justice, and to assure that terrorism does not triumph over peace in the Middle East.

"Once again the enemies of peace have murdered completely innocent Israeli citizens — including children — in their hysterical, determined fanatic attempt to kill all hope of peace between Israel and Palestinians and others in the Middle East. We must not give in to that." The US president drew a link between Israeli militants behind the assassination last November of the former prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and the Arab militants behind the four bombings of the past few days.

"They have one clear thing in common — they both want to end the peace process," Mr Clinton said. He demanded that the fledgling Palestinian Authority prove its sincerity with tougher measures against Hamas. "I believe Mr Arafat will have to do more, everything he can — up to the limits of what is possible." US diplomats tried — without much immediate success — to persuade Syria to join Egypt, Jordan and other Arab states in condemning the bombings. The Israeli delegation to peace talks with Syria taking place outside Washington broke off on Monday and prepared to fly back to Israel, despite US pleas to remain.

From the aircraft bringing him back to Washington, the US secretary of state, Warren Christopher, contacted the Syrian foreign ministry in a personal appeal for a public statement in condemnation of Hamas.

Israel has not publicly blamed Syria, but on Monday accused the government of Iran of being indirectly responsible for the Hamas wave of terror.

EU veto curb angers London

John Palmer in Brussels

THE gulf between Britain and its European Union partners over the Union's future widened last week after new moves by France, Germany and the European Commission to restrict use of the national veto in key areas.

A month before the conference to review the Maastricht treaty, Bonn and Paris made it clear they want to see an end to the veto even in decisions on the use of military force.

Meanwhile, the Commission president, Jacques Santer, said that the conference would also discuss whether new treaties could come into force even if they were not approved by all member states. Addressing the European Parliament, Mr Santer underlined the commission's determination to "see majority voting becoming the rule and not the exception in the European Union".

Britain did not disguise its dismay at the growing evidence that President Jacques Chirac is moving closer to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's goal of political as well as monetary union. French and German ministers agreed last week on a strategy for a common European foreign, security and defence policy.

The Franco-German proposal that the EU should have the power to launch military operations without the agreement of all EU countries is bound to worry the British prime minister, John Major. The two governments proposed that if a country disagreed with the majority on a peacekeeping mission, it should not be forced to take part but would agree not to block the action and would contribute to its cost.

UK seeks Burma trade

David Hencke

BRITAIN has launched a trade drive with the military dictators in Burma less than three years after Parliament in London was told that government policy was to provide no specific encouragement to UK firms to trade and invest in the country because of its human rights record.

Nearly £50,000 has been put aside for travelling expenses to two trade missions this year — including help for British companies such as Balfour Beatty, Blue Circle, GEC, Marconi, John Laing and Rolls-Royce — to boost business links.

The Department of Trade and Industry has also backed a London Chamber of Commerce and Industry promotion on Burma, The Latest Tiger Cub? and the British embassy in Rangoon is promoting a Modern Britain event.

The moves come against the refusal of the World Bank to invest and the condemnation of Burma by the European Union and the United Nations for its human rights record.

Details of the trade initiative have emerged after questioning by Derek Fatchett, the Labour party's shadow foreign affairs minister. Ministers have listed 26 companies receiving help to promote trade. A total of 35 firms took part in the first trade mission last week.

Mr Fatchett said on Monday: "Burma has an appalling human rights record. By changing their previous policy of not encouraging trade with Burma, the Conservatives will be seen as giving succour to the military regime ahead of a democratic settlement."



Prisoners of war for sale

Both sides in Chechenia are replenishing 'stocks' for swaps, writes **Andrew Harding** in Grozny

A GRUESOME trade in human lives is flourishing in Russia's breakaway republic of Chechenia. Chechen families are being asked to pay thousands of dollars in bribes to free relatives from a notorious archipelago of Russian "filtration" camps.

On the other side, dozens of Russian mothers are venturing into the mountains hoping to strike deals with Chechen fighters holding their sons as PoWs.

"It's like the Middle Ages here — things have got worse and worse," said Hussein Khammidov, head of a voluntary service which helps Chechens in their search for missing relatives.

Mr Khammidov, who set up his missing persons centre after his two sons were killed in the war, said the exchange "business" was booming following the breakdown of peace talks last autumn and the suspension of official prisoner swaps.

There is now strong evidence that both sides are trying to replenish their "stocks", the one taking more Russian soldiers hostage, the other detaining young Chechen men who dare to run the gauntlet of Russian checkpoints outside the capital Grozny.

The disappearance of an estimated 2,000 Chechen civilians has been condemned by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's mission in Chechenia.

"There are dozens of fresh cases every month of young Chechen men who are arrested, often on arbitrary grounds, and then disappear into the Russian camps," said an OSCE representative, Roman Wasilievski. "Some buy their way out, but by all anecdotal evidence — and some cases directly known to us — they are beaten systematically, deprived of food and tortured, including mock executions."

Ramzan Musaliev, a French journalist who witnessed last month's brutal Russian assault on the town of Novogroznenski, said he saw three Chechens being viciously beaten by troops. Another was kept overnight almost naked in a small pit dug in a field.

The journalist was lucky to survive his time in a Russian camp. On the way there, six men were shot and another two suffocated. "When we got there, they beat me unconscious — three times in all."

Families hoping to buy freedom for their Chechen relatives have to pay about 5 million roubles ($1,500). But even those who have the money often encounter new problems.

"The Russians told me they have my brother," said a tearful Chechen woman, Madina Mogomadova.

"First they wanted money, but then they told me to find a Russian prisoner of war to swap for him. I found one, called Sergei Limonov, in the mountains. But then they told me that Limonov is a deserter, and that I must find a Russian officer instead. Now they tell me they no longer have my brother — that he has been sentenced to 15 years in prison."

Russian parents looking for their soldier sons often receive little better treatment from their own government. "They tricked us — the scum," said Tamara Todeseichuk, who travelled thousands of miles from the Pacific coast to search for her son Sergei, who was captured two months ago by Chechen fighters. She found him "fat and healthy," living in a mountain village with his Chechen captors. "I held his hand . . . the Russians agreed to a swap — they said they would bring 26 Chechens to exchange but they never turned up — for 'technical reasons', they said."

Finally, one Chechen prisoner was exchanged for four Russians, but "the Chechen was in such a terrible state he died within a week".

Chechen fighters have generally won praise from Russian parents for the way they look after their prisoners. But hospitality sometimes comes at a high price.

"They want $40,000 from me," said one elderly Russian man. He said people in his home town were helping him to raise the money to buy back his officer son, but he was worried about heading into the mountains with so much cash, after hearing stories of similar journeys ending in tragedy.

War crimes tribunal indicts Serb general

Ed Vulliamy

THE HAGUE United Nations war crimes tribunal indicted a Serb general last week for his role in the shelling of civilians during the 43 months of the Sarajevo siege.

The tribunal's chief prosecutor, Judge Richard Goldstone, said General Djordje Djukic had been responsible for "the planning, preparation and execution of Bosnian Serb military operations". The charge sheet accused the Bosnian Serb army of indiscriminately firing on civilian targets in Sarajevo.

On Monday, Gen Djukic denied the charges but he has refused to answer prosecutors' questions or co-operate with the tribunal.

Last week, the Guardian revealed Gen Djukic's identity as a senior officer in the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav army, which claims to have withdrawn from the Bosnian conflict.

A tribunal spokesman said the detention order on Colonel Aleksa Krsmanovic, a Serb officer who was extradited from Bosnia at the same time as Gen Djukic, would be extended for another month.

The revelation that the general is Belgrade's man has explosive implications for the Dayton peace agreement, while cutting to the core of the history of the conflict by revealing Belgrade's secret role in the Bosnian Serb war machine.

It will also propel the Hague war crimes investigations in a direction the diplomatic world most fears: towards Belgrade and the Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, on whose co-operation the Dayton deal depends.

Gen Djukic's military identity documents show him serving in the Yugoslav army, with annual accreditation from General Staff headquarters in Belgrade until 1996.

Gen Djukic has been detained by the tribunal since February 12. He and another Serb, Colonel Aleksa Krsmanovic, were seized by Bosnian government police when they took a wrong turn near Sarajevo.

Documents also reveal that, contrary to its successive promises to the international community, the Yugoslav army has always been, and still is, deeply enmeshed in military affairs in Bosnia.

Classified military maps from the Yugoslav army reveal that it intended an all-out war against any international intervention in Bosnia at a time when that was being advocated by Germany and the United States in 1991.

Leaked military correspondence between Bosnia and Belgrade shows that the army General Staff in the Serbian capital secretly organised the Serbian military campaign in Bosnia. This has been often supposed, but never conclusively proved.

President Milosevic has given guarantees to successive international mediators that the Yugoslav army, VJ, would abandon and blockade the Bosnian Serb army, VRS.

In the spring of 1993, faced with acute US anger, Mr Milosevic promised to seal the border between Yugoslavia and his blood-brothers in Bosnia, and block assistance to the VRS. His word was accepted; the US pulled back from the brink.

In August 1994, Mr Milosevic promised "military and political sanctions" against the Bosnian Serbs, breaking military connections and allowing only the passage of humanitarian aid. The UN Security Council duly suspended sanctions against Serbia/Yugoslavia on September 23.

Mr Milosevic gave his word at Dayton that his army had long abandoned the Bosnian Serb warlord, General Ratko Mladic, wanted for genocide.

But Mr Milosevic's "blockade" of the Bosnian Serbs was a sieve, his assurances a giant lie.

Reports submitted to the UN Security Council by international monitors trying to patrol the Serbian-Bosnian border reveal a constant traffic of military equipment, munitions, planes and troops across the border from Yugoslavia into Bosnia.

ВОЈСКА ЈУГОСЛАВИЈЕ

General Djukic's military accreditation papers reveal him to be a general currently serving in the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav army

Gen Djukic is, by the admission of the Bosnian Serbs, head of logistics for their army. And the monitors' reports show what a vast operation it was to bring this war machine into Bosnia. The flood of men and weapons escalated before the bloody offensives against Bihac and Srebrenica. As head of logistics, Gen Djukic would have been pivotal.

The Bosnian Serb authorities said that Gen Djukic is an innocent, elderly man with a heart condition, fulfilling a workaday logistics role at VRS headquarters. But Gen Djukic's military card is headed Vojska Jugoslavia, the Yugoslav army. It is stamped annually until 1996, showing the number of his military post, 2130, and its location, Belgrade.

The card bears the symbol of the double-headed eagle of Yugoslavia, distinguished from that of the Bosnian Serbs by the fact that the eagle has no crown.

A second card headed Yugoslav army also attaches him to VJ unit 1089 in Belgrade, citing his address as 3 King Aleksander Kardjordjevica in Han Pjesak, just inside Bosnia, where Gen Mladic has his headquarters.

It is known that the Yugoslav military intervened on behalf of Bosnian Serbs ... war. But the Guardian now possesses two maps which show the Yugoslav army ready to fight for Bosnia against international peacekeeping forces.

The maps, drawn up in 1991, draft an all-out war against Nato or the United Nations, directed from Belgrade. They show the various corps grouped around population centres, especially those with high Serb populations.

The JNA, the old communist Yugoslav people's army, told the world it would pull out of Bosnia in May 1992. But an extraordinary internal correspondence between Belgrade and Bosnia shows how the Yugoslav army was stitched into the war, directing the Bosnian Serb military. Thus entwined with Bosnia's war, the JNA stayed long after its declared May departure date.

As a Yugoslav army general in charge of logistics in Bosnia, and based at the Han Pjesak headquarters, Gen Djukic would have been the man responsible for mobilising this tidal wave of munitions from his Yugoslav army to the Bosnian Serbs, and distributing it throughout forces which laid murderous siege to Muslim and Croat communities.

In Banja Luka, Colonel Milan Milutinovic, Gen Mladic's adjutant, described the general's role in the Bosnian war as distributing ...

Rebels ignore order to free their hostages

John Aglionby in Jakarta

SEPARATIST guerrillas holding 12 hostages, including four Britons, in Indonesia's remote Irian Jaya province have refused to free them despite being ordered to do so by their leaders in exile.

The rift within the Free Papua Movement (OPM) emerged after leaders in Sydney sent a letter to Kelly Kwalik, the rebel leader holding the hostages, saying that the movement's goal of attracting international attention to their cause had been achieved, according to a source close to the rescue operation.

"The target of attracting international attention has been met. There is no need to hold the hostages any longer. They are not our targets," the letter said.

The OPM is campaigning for independence for Irian Jaya, the western half of the island of New Guinea, which was ceded to Indonesia in 1963 under a United Nations-sponsored deal.

Mr Kwalik refused to comply with the order because he distrusts the Indonesian army and is afraid of retaliation by soldiers on Irianese tribespeople after he releases his captives, the source said. Several suspected OPM members have been shot by the army in Irian Jaya in the past year.

Last week, Bartholomeus Magal, an Irianese tribal chief, accused the army of harassing his people. "The military have tortured and beaten our people and accused us of supporting the OPM. I don't know why they kill young men and arrest many people in that belief," he said.

The source said Mr Kwalik would only release the hostages if ordered to do so by the OPM's supreme leader, who lives in neighbouring Papua New Guinea. He added that Mr Kwalik's refusal to comply with the letter means hopes are fading of a speedy conclusion to the crisis.

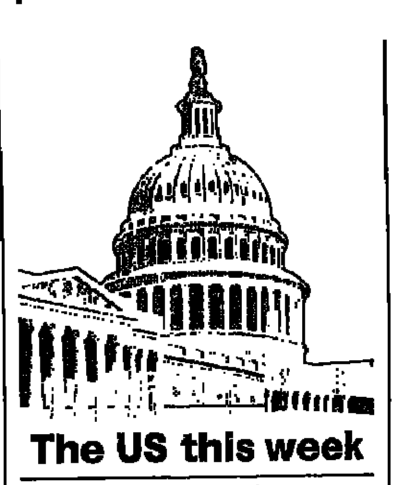
The captives include Cambridge University graduates Daniel Start, Bill Oates, Anna McIvor and Annette van der Kolk. They were undertaking biological research when seized on January 8.

Indonesian army spokesmen are refusing to comment on the letter or when the captives might be released. They maintain they will not bow to terrorism, but promise to free the hostages by peaceful means.

Representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross made what is believed to be their ninth visit to Mr Kwalik at the weekend, in an attempt to mediate on behalf of the Indonesian army. A doctor who examined the hostages last week said they were healthy but thin.

● A strong earthquake hit Irian Jaya province on Sunday, where at least 105 people were killed in an earthquake last month. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, Muhammad Said, an officer of ...

Why the South holds politicians in its thrall



The US this week

Martin Walker

AFTER its fitful and rather confusing start in Iowa and New Hampshire and Arizona, the 1996 presidential primary campaign has shifted to the South. The region has the historic opportunity to achieve what this year's earlier primaries failed to do: identify and choose the party's nominee. Confused by the contradictory verdicts from Iowa, New Hampshire and Arizona, Republicans were reassured by the overwhelming endorsement of Senator Robert Dole in the South Carolina primary. If the rest of the South follows that lead, then the 1996 Republican nominee is settled.

This is the power the Southern states hoped to have when they first concocted their regional Super-Tuesday primary in 1988. It was a smart move. With Bill Clinton of Arkansas in the White House, and Al Gore of Tennessee as his vice-president, not to mention Newt Gingrich of Georgia as Speaker, Southerners rule.

The states of the Old Confederacy may have lost the civil war, but they have dominated much of the US political system ever since, by having the discipline to vote as a regional block. For more than a century the South voted Democratic. In return, the South received federal jobs and investments.

The South has received tax breaks for its oil and natural gas, subsidies for its sugar and its rice, and acceptance of its anti-union laws and culture, which attracted employers to exploit a cheap labour market. Above all, the South received military bases and defence industries. Local politicians used their seniority to become chairmen of the various armed services committees in Congress. Carl Vinson and Richard Russell of Georgia, and Mendel Rivers of South Carolina between then created a military-industrial regional boom.

The South delivered political loyalty in return for a tacit understanding that the Democrats would not interfere with the regional culture of white supremacy and segregation. When President Lyndon Johnson, that good ol' boy from Texas, broke that agreement with the Civil Rights Act, the South launched its historic realignment.

The region began voting for the Republican Barry Goldwater in 1964 and went for George Wallace's third party in 1968. Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan finally sealed the South's conversion. It is nowadays voting as a block for the Republicans, to the degree that the Democrats can only hope to recapture the White House with centrist Southern candidates like Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

The South has demonstrated repeatedly that it retains awesome and disproportionate political power, but few these days ever ask the question, what is the South for? The answer used to be plain: to preserve segregated cultures and maintain white supremacy where the two interacted. That struggle is over. In many ways, the South now enjoys more agreeable and certainly more relaxed race relations than the rest of the US. So what exactly is the point of the South's remarkable political discipline, and what is this regional voting block seeking to preserve?

The South retains some distinctive characteristics. Its sons are markedly more likely than the national average to choose a military career. Southerners are about twice as likely to identify themselves as born-again. They are poorer, particularly in Alabama and Mississippi and Arkansas. So much we can gather from the census data.

But from other assorted files and clippings, and from Michael Weiss's slightly outdated but still essential survey of marketing data, The Clustering Of America, we can identify some other Southern characteristics. They eat a little less pizza, go to the movies fractionally less frequently, and are twice as likely as the rest of the country to spend their weekends at car races or fishing for bass. They drive more American cars and fewer Japanese. They watch more TV soap operas than the rest of the country and less public television. Its womenfolk are twice as likely as the national average to buy feminine hygiene sprays, and its menfolk twice as likely to chew tobacco.

This is all very interesting in terms of lifestyle, but it hardly amounts to the kind of distinctive culture that the South used to be. And one of the most interesting features of this remarkable election season is that it may finally help the rest of us discern what on earth the modern South thinks it is for. Fittingly, this voyage of political self-discovery began in South Carolina, which held the first Southern primary on March 2, followed by Georgia on March 5, and Florida, Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Louisiana on March 12.

As the first state to secede from the Union and provoke the Civil War in 1861, South Carolina has a long tradition of leading the South. It led the way into the textile industry, processing the cotton at home rather than exporting the bales across the Atlantic to Manchester. In the 1960s and '70s, it led the way into the industrial diversification that helped create the New South.

The old South Carolina was viscerally Democratic, in a distinctive, Southern way, combining populist rhetoric for the poor whites with poll taxes and literacy tests that effectively disenfranchised the blacks. In the 1980s, the political consultant Lee Atwater and Governor Caroll Campbell helped bring about the great transformation of the state from the most loyal of all Democratic bastions into what is now a solidly Republican state.

The new South Carolina is very different. Four of the six congressmen are Republicans, and one of the two Democratic congressmen, James Clyburn, in 1992 became the first black to be elected to Congress by South Carolina since the immediate aftermath of the civil war.



Thumbs up . . . Bob Dole exuding confidence in Maine before his win in the South Carolina primary PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT DURANT

South Carolina has also been in the forefront of that parallel social movement, the consolidation of the religious right into a political force. The Bob Jones University at Greenville is still known as "the buckle of the Bible Belt". Students may not smoke, drink, dance or go out on dates without being chaperoned. On the basis of biblical injunctions, courtships between the races were not approved, which meant that even Reagan was not able to get the university's tax-exempt charitable status restored.

A MAJORITY of the state's white citizens, 58 per cent, define themselves as "evangelical or born-again Christians", and so do 63 per cent of blacks. The Republican governor, David Beasley, is a darling of the Christian Coalition, after campaigning to restore prayer to public schools, curb abortion, and cut welfare "to stop babies having babies". His support for Dole was crucial in blunting Pat Buchanan's usual appeal to the religious right.

But the real distinction of the modern South Carolina can be identified more precisely. The state has become a pioneer in attracting foreign investment. When Buchanan checked into his hotel room last week to launch his primary campaign with speeches about the way American jobs were being sent overseas through unfair trade deals, the view from his window was dominated by the new Michelin building. Buchanan's arrival was greeted by the announcement from BMW that the German car-maker was plunging another $200 million into its new car plant.

The state's exports have tripled over the past eight years. Nearly 120,000 of the workforce in this state of 3.5 million people are employed by foreign-owned corporations who operate in South Carolina. When Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968, more than four out of five jobs in Greenville were in textile factories. Today, fewer than one job in eight is in textiles, in an area booming so fiercely that unemployment is just over 2 per cent. South Carolina is a shining symbol of how profitably the US now functions in the global economy.

When Buchanan wanted a shut-down textile plant as a backdrop for his primary campaign, he took his convoy of press buses to the Clearwater Finishing factory. It was a sad place, closed down first nine years ago, then re-opened, then closed again; a perfect prop for a political campaign. So perfect that the Democratic presidential candidate Dick Gephardt used it in 1988.

This is not to say that there are no newer casualties of free trade to be found in South Carolina. But Buchanan's warnings against global competition had only limited resonance in a state that has learned to welcome it. Buchanan's rivals note acidly that his biggest single financial backer, Roger Milliken, is a textile magnate whose factories are more vulnerable to foreign competition than most.

That is to underestimate the force of Buchanan's argument. He is not attacking trade as such, nor foreigners as such. He condemns "the new American managerial class, which seems to lack roots or values or loyalties, which forgets that our people do not exist to serve the economy; the economy exists to serve Americans". It was Buchanan's attacks on corporate layoffs and on the greed of overpaid managers that helped win him the New Hampshire primary. We shall see whether his demagogic skills can do as well in the bustling new South, or whether the entire region can join Georgia's capital, Atlanta, in calling itself "too busy to hate".

Atlanta is particularly busy now, preparing for this summer's Olympic Games. The millions of tourists will doubtless go from the modern centre to the dignified old street of houses where Martin Luther King used to live, and which now flanks the shrine and museum to his life. Some tourists will make it out to the home of the author of Gone With The Wind, looking at the South of the past, and in this sense they will be doing a Buchanan.

THE FALSE note that Buchanan strikes in the South is less to do with trade than with nostalgia. Buchanan made a point of going to The Citadel for a campaign speech against the political correctness which sought to force this ancient military academy to admit women. The Citadel was founded in 1824 to train men to put down any further slave rebellions. It is the symbol of the South of the past, just like the old Confederate flag, which Buchanan also seeks to defend and to justify against the politically correct who would ban it.

"America can make room for the anthem of the civil rights movement We Shall Overcome, but it should also make room for Dixie," Buchanan said last week. Few sensible people would argue with that. But then few sensible people would think the matter worth one tenth of the political time and rhetoric Buchanan invests in it. He is obsessed by the trappings of such nostalgias, and herein lies his biggest mistake. The South has moved on, and Buchanan has not.

The Southern political establishment is trying hard to deliver their region to Dole, to display yet again its remarkable voting discipline. Recall that four years ago the South legitimised its own Bill Clinton of Arkansas as the Democratic front-runner. Four years before that, South Carolina was George Bush's bulwark, which finally drove Dole, his rival, out of the presidential race of 1988.

Dole is hoping that history will not repeat itself this time. But he arrived in the South looking bedraggled, old and tired, and not at all the convincing front runner he had always claimed to be. The Republican campaign is a mess, the kind of bunched field that often leads to nasty collisions in horse races.

That is why, against all the tradition of Southern voting discipline and against the economic self-interest of a region that is prospering from global trade, Buchanan will make hay in the South. He has a solid base of 25-30 per cent of the vote. So long as three other Republican candidates compete to divide the remainder, Minority Pat can still do alarmingly well.

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Refugees fuel strife on Zaire's border

Witchcraft and primitive weapons lie in wait for government troops, writes **Greg Barrow** in Sake

ZAIRE has begun sending extra troops to Masisi province in the east, where it believes that Hutu refugees from neighbouring Rwanda are inflaming ethnic tension with the native Hunde people and disrupting agricultural production in a region that was once Zaire's breadbasket.

Hunde, Hutu and Tutsi communities have been raiding each other's villages and engaging in vicious battles with little more than spears, machetes, and bows and arrows.

Farms and ranches which once fed cities as far away as the capital Kinshasa are being systematically looted, and the meat from stolen cattle is being sold at knock-down prices in the Rwandan refugee camps. The International Committee of the Red Cross, one of the few relief agencies still working in Masisi, estimates that almost half the region's 600,000 people are now displaced from their homes.

"It's a very, very brutal conflict," says Piera Borradori, an ICRC official in Goma. "Masisi is not far from Goma, and Goma is a very civilised modern town, but in Masisi there's real tribal fighting going on."

Relief agencies, already struggling to cope with the Rwandan refugee problem in Goma, are being overwhelmed by the flight from Masisi. In one week at the beginning of February 3,000 Tutsis fled from Masisi to Rwanda. Many of them belong to families which have lived in Zaire since colonial boundaries were drawn a century ago. Now they have decided that their adopted home is too dangerous.

They say the situation has deteriorated drastically since Rwandan Hutu refugees arrived in Goma. Hundes and Tutsis in Masisi accuse Hutus of collaborating with members of the former Rwandan army and interahamwe militia, which led the 1994 genocide. Officials say that former soldiers and militiamen in the Goma refugee camps know they cannot stay for ever and are looking for places to settle in the Zairean interior.

"The Hutu people who have been living in Masisi have joined forces with their brothers from Rwanda," says Mateka Hangi, a Hunde chief who was forced to flee his village in Masisi. He now lives in a makeshift shelter of palm leaves and bamboo in a church compound in Sake, a town on the edge of Masisi province.

"I know very well that the former Rwandan military and the interahamwe want to take over Masisi and make it an annexe of Rwanda," he says. "It's highly regrettable to see the Rwandan Hutu militia bringing their ethnic strife here and making the Hunde people suffer in the country of their birth."

The government hopes to solve the problem by putting more troops in the region, but few soldiers are keen to go there. Last week a Zairean officer's body arrived in Goma in 22 pieces, and many other soldiers have met a similar fate.

In an attempt to scare off the opposition, Hunde and Hutu fighters are using witchcraft. Aid workers report seeing fighters wearing banana fronds and fetishistic necklaces of human hands. Such stories circulate widely, and troops drafted in from the rather more sophisticated Kinshasa are expressing little desire to confront the terror in the bush.

Funny money splits Canada

Claire Trevena in Toronto

IT DID not take long to find a nickname for Canada's newest coin: when one fell apart on the first day of issue, the bimetallic $2 coin became known as "two bits".

Since then, two-bit bashing has become a national pastime. Schoolchildren try to break the coins in the playground, shop assistants cannot resist giving them a push, and physics teachers use them in classroom demonstrations. Bank workers open packets of the new coins warily, fearful that the middles will be missing.

The $2 coin — aluminium bronze with a nickel surround — came into circulation last month as a hardy replacement for the two-dollar bill. Unlike the folding stuff, which has a lifespan of only 12 months, a coin is supposed to last 20 years.

One of the first people to hold a $2 coin dropped it — and the centre rolled away. Soon everyone wanted a crack at it: some have taken hammers to the coins while others report that the middles pop out most easily when cold.

The Royal Canadian Mint rejected methods used for producing bimetallic coins in other countries and developed its own process. Within five days of the coin's release it was running tests to find out where it had gone wrong. No explanation has yet been found.

If only the coin's credibility problems ended there. Some have been sent out to banks unstamped. Instead of a picture of the Queen on one side and a polar bear on the other, the middles — if in place — are blank. So Canadians cannot, after all, "see the Queen with a bare behind", as they quipped when the design was revealed.

The $2 coin will struggle to recover its dignity. Jibes about stable currencies and separatism abound, And an alternative epithet has emerged: with reference to the $1 coin — known as a Loonie after the bird on its tail — people are calling the bear-bottomed coin a "Moonie". "Doubloonie", "toonie" and "bear-bucks" have also been heard.

Derek Cullen, a patriot and law student at the University of Victoria, was so incensed on hearing that a jeweller was selling broken coins as earrings, that he filed a complaint with the police over the defacing and "demiddling" of the currency. "We might as well be burning flags," he said. — *The Observer*

Oil spill bills flowing in

IT IS almost a month since the oil tanker Sea Empress ran aground off the coast of Milford Haven, and public discussion is focusing on dying guillemots and razorbills. But behind the scenes the talk is of money, *reports Chris Barrie.*

In the first instance, the US oil group Texaco will get the bill. But the labyrinthine business arrangements of international shipping mean that it will be many months, even years, before the participants in the drama know for sure what their financial contribution will be.

The Sea Empress's cargo was destined for Texaco's Milford Haven refinery. Under the contract with the tanker's owners and operators, Texaco has accepted responsibility for the oil even though the disaster took place before final delivery.

The company is likely to try to recover its financial losses from the Sea Empress's owners, the Alegrete Shipping Company, a division of a Cypriot company, Seatanker.



A scoter, caked in oil, lies dead on Tenby's North Beach as the spill hits the resort's tourist trade PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MORGAN

But by far the largest expenditure will be for anti-pollution measures and compensation for local industries such as fishing. Loss assessors in Milford Haven have pencilled in claims of up to £20 million for loss of earnings at local businesses.

Nearly 300 fishermen and fish merchants voted last week to keep their boats in harbour and set up an action group to draw up demands for compensation. The industry was worth £7 million a year, but customers have cancelled orders in the aftermath of widespread pollution.

Meanwhile some wildlife experts predict the eventual death toll of seabirds could reach 50,000.

Princess agrees to divorce

Edward Pilkington and Sally Weale

THE Princess of Wales announced last week that she had agreed to a divorce, opening the prospect of an imminent end to the royal marriage.

In a short statement greeted by the Queen as "most interesting", the princess said she had "agreed to Prince Charles's request for a divorce". Once the break has been cleared by the courts, she said she would remain in her Kensington Palace apartment, continue to share all decisions relating to the couple's children, and carry the title Diana, Princess of Wales. The statement did not say whether she would have the right to append "Her Royal Highness" to her title.

But the statement, put out by her PR adviser, Jane Atkinson after the Prince and Princess of Wales met in St James's Palace last week, surprised and angered Buckingham Palace.

Neither the Queen's nor Prince Charles's offices had been given any warning — an echo of Diana's BBC Panorama interview, also arranged behind their backs.

The news that the princess is prepared to go along with divorce after three years' separation will come as a considerable relief to her husband and to the Queen. In her television interview last November, the princess had stated bluntly that she had no intention of "going quietly". There had been speculation that the princess planned to block the divorce for a further two years.

The dispute over the princess's statement suggests that vexed questions such as her full title will have to be settled during negotiations. The title to be used by the princess is in the gift of the Queen.

The focus of the royal wrangle now shifts to the lawyers who have to negotiate a multi-million-pound agreement. The figure of £15 million has been mooted. Divorce proceedings and the settlement could take months to complete.

The prince's lawyers are said to be determined to secure a proposed confidentiality clause or "gagging order" as a condition of the settlement with the aim of preventing the princess speaking out about their relationship and the royal family in a manner which could further damage the monarchy.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman described the notion of a confidentiality clause as "pure speculation", but it is known that officials are desperate to avoid a repetition of the princess's Panorama interview, which was deemed to be deeply harmful to the monarchy.

Should the princess break any such confidentiality agreement, the royal family is unlikely to want to take her to court or seek damages from her. They are more likely to keep her in check by threatening to stop agreed maintenance payments of up to £750,000 a year.

The princess's legal team is thought to favour a one-off lump sum payment, which would make it almost impossible for the palace to enforce any confidentiality clause. Negotiations are likely to be protracted.

Meanwhile, LIVE TV, the cable television network owned by Mirror Group Newspapers, made an aggressive bid to buy a film being touted by James Hewitt about his relationship with the princess, who in her Panorama interview admitted having had an affair with him.

Mr Hewitt has prepared an hour-long documentary on their relationship in the hope of securing a lucrative deal on both sides of the Atlantic. American networks have already expressed interest in buying it. However, Rupert Murdoch's Sky satellite TV refused to be involved.

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Labour MP apologises for royal remarks

THE shadow Welsh Secretary Ron Davies apologised on Sunday for giving an interview in which he said the Prince of Wales was not fit to be king because he talks to vegetables and likes blood sports, *writes Patrick Wintour.*

Mr Davies made the remarks in an interview on BBC Wales on Sunday, St David's Day.

In an apology hastily agreed with the Labour leader, Tony Blair, Mr Davies said: "I made a number of remarks which could be taken as a comment on his personal morality, and his fitness to be king. In view of Labour's support for the monarchy and the offence these comments could cause, I withdraw them and apologise."

The Tory MP Alan Duncan, former chairman of the Conservative constitutional affairs committee, said: "Ron Davies is a shallow politician who demeans the Labour front bench and the process of politics, and if Labour is not be branded as utterly hypocritical, he should go before the rising of the sun."

Mr Blair said later: "Ron Davies has rightly apologised and withdrawn his remarks, and that is the end of the matter."

Mr Davies told a BBC audience: "It just seems to me that someone who preaches the virtues that he's supposed to preach doesn't set a very good example. We're told that he spends time talking to trees, flowers and vegetables and so on, and yet we know that he encourages his young sons to go out into the countryside to kill wild animals and birds just for fun, for sport."

In the wake of Mr Davies's comments, Mr Blair was under pressure to allow a free-ranging debate within the Labour party on the future of the monarchy.

A number of Labour MPs went on record — at least 15 of whom are probably republicans — supporting Mr Davies and demanding a more mature debate in the Labour party on the monarchy.

The Week In Britain James Lewis

Servicemen 'back ban on gays in the military'

A SURVEY of British soldiers has found "overwhelming support" for the retention of the ban on gay men and women in the military. Announcing the findings, the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, said the vast majority of soldiers regarded homosexuals in the services as bad for discipline and morale.

The survey, which will now be handed to the standing committee on the Armed Forces Bill, was requested by the High Court, and urged by the Labour party, after a case brought by four gay ex-service personnel who were dismissed from the military because of their homosexuality. The four want leave to appeal to the High Court against their dismissal and say that, if they are turned down, they will go to the European Court of Human Rights.

The Armed Forces Minister, Nicholas Soames, and the three service chiefs of staff, have all expressed fierce opposition to relaxing the ban, but legal advisers have warned them that current policy could be found to be in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

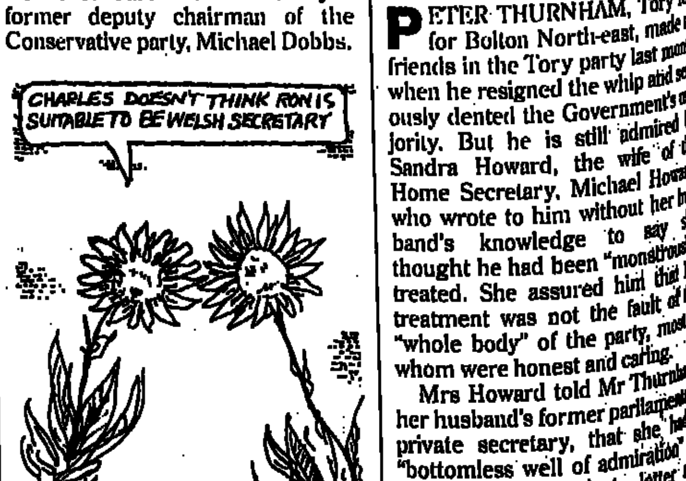
Labour is cagey on the issue, and the survey will put extra pressure on the party not to confront military opinion by promising to lift the ban — a move than proved so disastrous in the US for President Clinton.

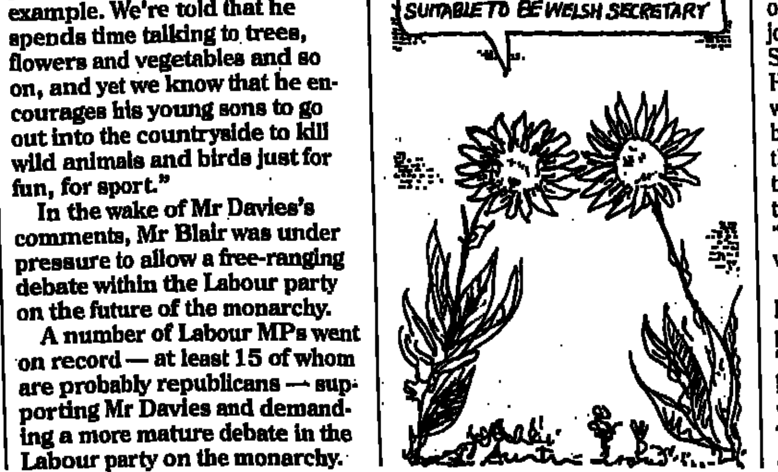
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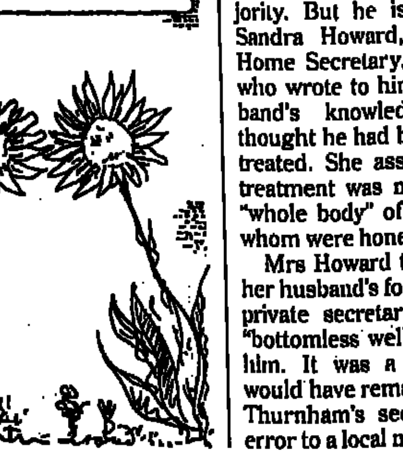
THE TORY party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, followed in the footsteps of his predecessors when he lashed out at broadcasters whom he accused of displaying "persistent political bias across a broad spectrum of programmes".

An earlier Tory chairman, Norman Tebbit, was also fond of bashing the messenger when the Government was going through a bad patch, and even used to keep a tally of column inches, and minutes of air time, devoted to the various parties. The former Labour prime minister, Harold Wilson, was similarly paranoid about the "Tory press".

Dr Mawhinney, however, seemed to sense a more sinister plot, extending beyond news coverage to political dramas and topical comedy and satirical shows. He singled out the BBC's far-fetched House Of Cards drama, and Channel 4's The Politician's Wife, complaining that both centred wholly on the Tories. The BBC tartly reminded him that House Of Cards was written by a former deputy chairman of the Conservative party, Michael Dobbs.







JUST when it seemed that social security benefits could be cut no further, news was leaked of an ingenious plan dreamed up by ministers to cut the "luxury" end of the Benefits Agency to save another £23 million and, at the same time, to discourage people from recovering £2 billion in unclaimed benefits.

The so-called "quick-win savings" package, prepared for next year's public spending round, was leaked to a Labour MP, Alan Williams. Its targets for economies included cuts in telephone advice services, shortening the opening hours of benefit offices, axing press and public relations officers outside London, ending subsistence payments for claimants attending medical examinations, and curtailing "benefit buses" which promote the social security system outside urban centres.

IN THE rush to select parliamentary candidates, Labour is embarrassed by constituency disputes and allegations of ballot-rigging which have led to investigations by the National Executive Committee.

For the first time, selection is being made under the new "one member-one vote" system of balloting. In Glasgow Govan, it was found that 34 ballot signatures did not match those on the membership application forms. The loser, Mohammad Sarwar, complained that 51 of his postal votes had been improperly validated, and the selection of the winner, Malcolm Watson, existing MP for Glasgow Central, was not endorsed. The NEC is investigating.

In Swindon North, the candidate will be directly chosen by an NEC sub-committee because it has decided that ill-feeling over an earlier, invalidated selection is so rife that a fair ballot is impossible. There is another NEC inquiry in Exeter where the candidate, John Lloyd, is alleged to have betrayed a fellow anti-apartheid campaigner who was executed by the South African government.

One member-one vote balloting was designed to lessen trade union influence in the selection of candidates. The Labour leader, Tony Blair, has now taken another step in the same direction by banning trade unions' financial sponsorship of MPs and parliamentary candidates. Unions can, however, continue to sponsor constituency parties.

PETER THURNHAM, Tory MP for Bolton North-east, made [illegible] friends in the Tory party last month when he resigned the whip and seriously dented the Government's majority. But he is still admired by Sandra Howard, the wife of the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, who wrote to him without her husband's knowledge to say she thought he had been "monstrously" treated. She assured him that his treatment was not the fault of the "whole body" of the party, most of whom were honest and caring.

Mrs Howard told Mr Thurnham, her husband's former parliamentary private secretary, that she had a "bottomless well of admiration" for him. It was a private letter and would have remained so — until Thurnham's secretary faxed it in error to a local newspaper.

London and Dublin gamble for peace

Michael White and David Sharrock

JOHN MAJOR and John Bruton last week put all the players in the Northern Irish peace process on the spot when they met Sinn Fein's demand for an unbreakable date for all-party talks, and warned that they will impose their own election formula on the province if its feuding politicians fail to agree one within a week.

At a Downing Street summit the two prime ministers buried substantial past differences to gamble on being able to cajole the reluctant Unionist parties to the conference table in 13 weeks' time and isolate the IRA's hardline bombing faction.

But a split in loyalist paramilitary ranks cast a shadow over the opening round on Monday of proximity meetings intended to pave the way for the all-party talks on June 10.

Hard-line dissident elements of the two main loyalist groups, the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Freedom Fighters, announced they were pulling out of the ceasefire. "From today we will execute members of PIRA [Provisonal IRA] and Sinn Fein," a spokesman for the breakaway faction told a Belfast newspaper on Sunday. He said the peace process was a farce and that unionists were being humiliated into making concessions.

A new group, neither UVF nor Ulster Defence Association, would create "a balance of fear", but its operations would not include the Irish Republic, there would not be random sectarian attacks, and it would stop if the IRA declared another ceasefire.

The IRA refused to show its hand over whether it intends to call a new ceasefire when it issued what amounted to a holding statement on its response to the setting of a date for all-party talks.

Meanwhile, President Clinton made his most ambitious intervention into the Northern Ireland peace process by granting the Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams, a new three-month multiple-entry visa, even though the IRA has not renewed its ceasefire.

The news angered unionists but left nationalists and loyalist representatives unmoved.

In Dublin, senior officials believe it shows that President Clinton is willing to take a risk on bolstering Mr Adams's credibility within his own movement in order to bring about another IRA ceasefire.

The White House stressed that the visa could be revoked instantly if Mr Adams broke his undertaking not to engage in fund-raising, and added that the visa had been granted in the context of the "very important and historic announcement" by London and Dublin that all-party talks were to start in June.

The clear implication of the White House's public statements, and hints coming more privately from officials, was that a renewed ceasefire agreement by the IRA was now very close.

Mr Adams will not be invited to the White House, unlike last year, and he will not have any official meetings with members of the Clinton administration until the ceasefire is formally restored.

In the new drive to force the pace of progress, election details were due to be hammered out in "intensive consultations" in Belfast this week.

If they fail, Mr Major is determined to break past filibustering on both sides. He will consult Dublin and then legislate at Westminster to impose a formula "based on what we judge is the process likely to command the widest support among the political parties," he said.

At the same time the two leaders hope the IRA can be shamed into abandoning its renewed bombing campaign so that Sinn Fein can be admitted to full democratic status. Neither government is prepared to talk to Sinn Fein until it embraces the six principles — which include a total renunciation of violence — set out by Senator George Mitchell.

"They can bomb themselves out of the process, they cannot bomb themselves in," Mr Major told the Commons as Mr Bruton gave near-identical assurances to the Dail.

The Irish prime minister stressed that "there are no pre-conditions" to talks, an important concession to nationalist demands which angered unionists.

Privately some Tories fear that, contrary to official assurances, what the two leaders condemned as "murderous IRA attacks" have gained concessions.

But few MPs disputed Mr Major's assessment that "the road ahead may be long and stony".

Crowded jails asked to find room for more

Alan Travis

A STATE of emergency is to be declared in 46 prisons because of a crisis caused by the soaring jail population.

The prisons will be told in the next few days they must provide "additional space over and above their normal operational capacity" as an emergency measure.

Some jails are being asked to find space for 10 per cent more prisoners than their official capacity. Hospital units and offices are expected to be converted into cells, more single cells will be occupied by two inmates and in some cases prisoners will be put in dormitories as governors try to house inmates in jails which are already officially full.

The decision to declare an emergency in the 46 prisons — a third of the total in England and Wales — means industrial relations agreements to restrict overcrowding will be suspended and industrial action declared illegal.

Harry Fletcher, of the National Association of Probation Officers, said the crisis was a direct result of Michael Howard's "prison works" policy. "Over the next few months the Prison Service will be on the verge of collapse," he said.

A draft Prison Service notice to staff, to be sent out this week , says the measures are needed because of the recent rapid growth in the prison population.

"A new record population in excess of 53,000 was achieved for the first time on February 21, a figure that is nearly 500 higher than the peak population expected during the month of February. It remains to be seen whether these high levels persist, but if they do the population could well exceed 54,000 by Easter," it says.

The prison population has risen by a quarter since Mr Howard became Home Secretary in May 1993, when it stood at 43,500. The internal notice also says the emergency will last at least until May.

The contingency plans are being put into action because the Home Secretary and the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, have agreed to end the traditional use of police cells to ease the pressure.

The jails are being asked to find space immediately for a further 1,330 prisoners. Those which will take the most include the private prisons at Doncaster, the Wolds and Blakenhurst.

Obsessive stalker jailed for inflicting mental harm

Clare Dyer

AN OBSESSIVE stalker who waged a three-year hate campaign against a former work colleague and caused her serious psychological damage was jailed for three years on Monday for inflicting grievous bodily harm.

Former petty officer Anthony Burstow, of no fixed abode, terrified 28-year-old Tracey Sant in a campaign that included sending her a soiled sanitary towel in the post, stealing her underwear from a washing line, pouring solvent over her car and writing her sinister notes.

Burstow, who did not touch Ms Sant, admitted at Reading crown court, Berkshire, unlawfully and maliciously inflicting grievous bodily harm on her between February 19 and July 27 last year.

The case is thought to be the first in which a stalker has been convicted of inflicting GBH, although two men who harassed women and caused them psychological distress by telephone calls and stealing clothes have been found guilty of the lesser offence of causing actual bodily harm.

Although Burstow, aged 36, pleaded guilty, his conviction will be seen as a victory for campaigners demanding justice for victims of stalkers.

Britain has no specific anti-stalker laws but the Home Office is reviewing such laws in the US, Canada and Australia to see whether workable legislation can be introduced.

Sgt Linda Ferman, who has been involved in the case from the beginning, said a motion would be put forward at a police conference in May calling for changes in the law to make it easier to prosecute stalkers.

Judge Josh Lait told Burstow that he had subjected Ms Sant to a "prolonged mental ordeal" and "sought to control her whole life". A note he had left on her father's car proved that he had intended to cause her psychological distress. It ended: "Let's remember this is totally personal. Nothing will change how much I hate you."

The judge read out doctors' reports which said that Ms Sant had been suffering from severe depression, sleeping badly and experiencing panic attacks, all brought on by Burstow's psychological warfare.

Ms Sant said afterwards: "I am very relieved that it has finally been recognised that Burstow has affected my life and my health." But she feared that he would continue to torment her after his release. "I don't think this will be an end to it."

Paul Reid, prosecuting, told the court that Ms Sant had struck up a friendship with Burstow while she was a civil servant at HMS Collingwood in Fareham, Hampshire, in the summer of 1992. At the time Ms Sant was married to a serving officer and Burstow's wife was away in Hong Kong. There was nothing to suggest that they were romantically involved.

She ended their friendship in August 1992 because she felt he was becoming too involved with her. "Burstow refused to accept this and from this time on developed an obsession," said Mr Reid.

Detective admits taking bribes

Duncan Campbell

A DETECTIVE admitted last week that he had agreed to accept bribes of nearly £70,000 for providing confidential police operational information. The case is one of the most serious involving a Metropolitan police officer since a series of corruption trials in the 1970s.

In a dramatic twist after 11 weeks of a complex trial at the Old Bailey, Detective Constable John Donald admitted having taken the money from his co-defendant, Kevin Cressey, accused of drug-dealing.

Mr Donald, aged 38, of the South East Regional Crime Squad, pleaded not guilty when the trial opened last year.

Last week he changed his plea to guilty to four charges of corruption. He pleaded not guilty to two further conspiracy charges.

Donald was exposed by a BBC Panorama programme in September 1993, which clandestinely filmed and taped him.

The trial was due to finish this month. At the start, the judge, Mrs Justice Heather Steel, told jurors that the prosecution and defence had agreed that, as a precaution, they should be protected.

Donald admitted that he had agreed to accept £40,000 for sabotaging the case against Cressey, who had been arrested for alleged drug dealing.

He also admitted accepting a further £18,500 from Cressey. Donald further admitted he agreed to accept an unconnected £10,000 bribe as a reward for information about police operations involving Kenneth Noye, jailed for involvement in the Brink's-Mat bullion robbery, and Michael Lawson.

God in a skirt raises a few eyebrows

Martin Wainwright

AND LO, it cometh to pass every time that the York Mystery Plays are here (which is to say, every four years since time began), an almighty row erupteth not long before ye box office doth open.

True to form, it emerged last week that God this year is to wear a skirt in the summer pageant — and not because that is the fashion in traditional pictures of Heaven. Ruth Ford, aged 63, has been chosen as the first woman to play God in the York Mysteries since the late 14th century, when the Corpus Christi Play, with 48 sections and a speaking cast of 300, was first performed.

The news triggered a negative reaction from the city's Minster, where Archdeacon George Austin condemned it as "political correctness gone mad".

He added: "They are free to do what they want, but the Bible describes God in male terms and we should follow scripture, not modern feminism."

There was a softer response from Bishopthorpe Palace in York, where Archbishop David Hope limited himself to the prophecy that "a few eyebrows will be raised".

Ms Ford, a shopkeeper, showed a promising grasp of theology last week, welcoming the part as "by far the biggest and most daunting role I've had", and denying religious qualms because "God is a presence, not a specific gender".

The Mystery Plays have enjoyed plenty of good spats before, including a Hindu Christ (much praised in reviews). Disappointingly for controversialists, the role of the Virgin Mary has gone again to a local schoolgirl, Lauren O'Rooke Walker, who follows in the footsteps of Mary Ure and Judi Dench.

Labour fury at rail give-away

Keith Harper and Sarah Ryle

A FURIOUS row broke out last week after Labour accused the Government of handing over public assets and cash worth £5.7 billion to the private sector consortium which won the £3 billion contract to build the Channel Tunnel rail link.

The give-away includes Waterloo International and St Pancras stations, and 120 acres of prime development land in central London. The assets are on top of a £1.4 billion direct Treasury grant.

The company will also get European Passenger Services, which operates the Eurostar train between London, Paris and Brussels, free of capital debt; St Pancras Chambers, a listed building with development potential as a five-star luxury hotel; a further 120 acres at Stratford, east London; and 635 properties along the route.

When asked to put a value on the assets, Sir Derek Hornby, a former British Rail executive who is heading the London and Continental Railway consortium, refused. Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, also refused to say what they were worth. But Labour claimed the total value was £5.7 billion, including the grant and £1.3 billion of Eurostar debt, which will be written off.

The central London land — described by Sir George in the Commons as "the largest redevelopment opportunity in London" — could be worth more than £3 billion once developed, Labour said. Waterloo International was estimated to be worth £500 million, and St Pancras Chambers, which has had £10 million of public money spent on restoring its façade, could be worth £70 million as a 250-bedroom hotel. Rolling stock included was worth £650 million, and the properties could fetch £50 million.

Labour's shadow transport secretary, Clare Short, described the deal as "the great asset give-away". "British Rail could have built the line seven years ago for less than £1.9 billion of public money."

The consortium, which includes Richard Branson's Virgin company, investor bankers, S G Warburg, National Express and civil engineering company Ove Arup, has pledged to build the new 68-mile link from London to Folkestone by 2003.

Sir Derek said that LCR would put up £2 billion of private sector money by 2000, the year the Government has promised to keep its part of the bargain with the £1.4 billion subsidy.

It later emerged that a bid £500 million lower than the one submitted by its nearest rival was the main reason why LCR secured the £3 billion contract. The bid immediately appealed to the Treasury even though the alternative submitted by Eurorail, a consortium which included Trafalgar House and the National Westminster Bank, was regarded as better balanced.

Mr Branson's Virgin group, which is part of the LCR consortium, has also been identified as one of the bidders for the Gatwick Express service between Gatwick Airport and Victoria station, London. Final bids closed last week for four passenger routes, which are among the 25 carved up from British Rail's old empire.

Apart from the Gatwick Express, the other routes are the East Coast main line, Network South Central and Midland main line.

The Government has told BR's chairman, John Welsby, that it wants privatisation completed by March 31 next year. The new target is for the BR board to transfer or dismiss by that date all but a handful of staff.

The objective is to make it impossible for an incoming Labour government to reverse privatisation if the Tories are defeated at the election.

But John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, this week hardened his party's stance on renationalisation of the railways when he guaranteed Labour would bring Railtrack back into public ownership.

If the Government sells all shares in Railtrack, Labour is likely to convert them into preference shares, avoiding the expense of buying back shares but securing control of the track system. Dividends would still have to be paid to shareholders.

Mr Prescott promised the railways would be publicly owned and accountable, adding that a clause to this effect would be put into Railtrack's sale prospectus due in May.

Mr Prescott's remarks suggest he has won an internal battle to ensure that Labour will not simply seek tight regulation of the railways, as it proposes with the other privatised industries. Labour has already said that on election it will not agree to further train operating services being privatised, or agree to the renewal of any private contracts.

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Gambling controls to be swept away

Dan Atkinson

SWEEPING reforms planned for Britain's gaming laws propose a fundamental shift away from social controls and towards gambling on demand.

The £800 million bingo industry will be almost completely deregulated, bookies will be allowed to advertise in newspapers and jackpot machines may be able to pay out thousands of pounds.

Thirteen towns would be added to the current list of 53 areas in which casinos may be sited. They are Oxford, Slough, Peterborough, Swindon, Gloucester, Hastings, Ipswich, Croydon, Dartford, Redbridge, Folkestone, Morecambe and Weymouth.

The shake-up — announced by the Home Office last week — is already generating controversy. Junior minister Timothy Kirkhope said he would be looking at legalising side-betting on the National Lottery. But the heritage department, fearing the loss of "good cause" money to bookmakers, said this "is something . . . we are adamant we do not want to see".

Meanwhile parts of the industry were suggesting the proposed relaxation did not go far enough. Alan Goodenough, chief executive of London Clubs, the Ritz casino owner, said the partial shift towards regulating gambling as a commercial rather than a social phenomenon may prove unstoppable.

Shares in the bingo giant Rank Organisation jumped on the news, as did those of Bass, owner of the Coral bookmakers, Ladbroke and London Clubs.

The proposals, published nearly a year later than planned, represent a response to pressures on the British gaming industry, notably the impact of the National Lottery and competition from overseas gaming centres.

The most radical measure is the effective severance of Britain's 970 bingo clubs from tough controls on the 119 casinos. The consultation paper described the game as "a very popular, low-risk form of gambling".

Under the plans, bingo sites will no longer have to form members-only clubs, and the 24-hour "cooling-off" period between joining and playing will be scrapped. Punters will be able to play on impulse.

For casinos, the package moves towards abolishing the members-only principle for "hard" gambling. The 48-hour "cooling-off" period is halved, and punters will be able to apply for membership by post, instead of in person. The limit of six jackpot machines per club should be increased to 64, and the £250 jackpot prize limit either raised or abolished.

Licensing hours — currently limited to midnight — should be brought into line with those of nightclubs (2am, and 3am in central London), and limited advertising should be permitted in telephone directories and tourist guides.

Casinos and bingo clubs will be permitted to accept payment by debit but not credit cards.

Refugees challenge Lilley

Alan Travis

A WOMAN who fled to Britain after being imprisoned by the security forces in Zaire is to mount a High Court challenge to the Government's decision to deny welfare benefits to 30,000 asylum seekers.

The 25-year-old woman, identified only as Ms B, has been given permission by the High Court to mount a full legal challenge this week to the benefit cuts introduced last month by the Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley.

The case will be heard with actions brought by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Westminster council and Hammersmith and Fulham council. The three actions amount to the main legal challenge to the Government's policy.

Ms B's challenge could open the way to the restoration of income support and housing benefit to thousands who fail to claim asylum immediately on their arrival in Britain. She was denied benefits despite claiming asylum on the day she arrived. All her family and friends are in Zaire.

Her husband, who was a member of an opposition party in Zaire, was shot dead by President Mobutu's security forces during a political meeting five months ago. She was arrested at his funeral and held for four weeks. Her lawyer, Louise Christian, said: "She was kept in a cell with six other women. She was raped several times by guards. . . One of them took pity on her and smuggled her out of the prison in a large sack of rice in a lorry."

Her family in Zaire paid an agent to bring her to Britain to claim asylum. She flew first to Brussels on a false Greek passport and then took the Eurostar train to Waterloo, London, where there was no immigration check, and the agent took her to the immigration office in Croydon to claim political asylum.

She has been refused income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit by the Department of Social Security because she did not claim "on arrival" under the new regulations.

"There is medical evidence which confirms her traumatised state," said Ms Christian. "She should get full asylum status here. Her case shows that it is not only bogus asylum seekers who are being affected.

"If she is successful it will mean all those 'in country' applicants who applied for income support and housing benefit and were refused will have their claims backdated."

● The son of a "disappeared" Nigerian pro-democracy activist on Monday asked the Court of Appeal to block his deportation.

Lawyers for Ade Onibiyo, aged 20, told the appeal court his life was at risk after his father, Abdul, aged 54, had disappeared without trace in Nigeria following his removal from Britain last October.

Nicholas Blake QC said the "distressing news" of the execution in Nigeria last November of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other activists came amid fears for the father's safety. These fears, coupled with the Nigerian regime's apparent willingness to suppress criticism with brutality, combined to make a "credible fresh claim" for asylum.



Pig in the middle . . . Flossie was branded a nuisance by the judge

Judge rules Flossie must go

POT-BELLIED Flossie the pig and her four daily kilos of manure were officially branded a nuisance last week, ending a rancorous neighbours' dispute and landing her owner with a bill of more than £35,000, *writes Martin Wainwright.*

Computer engineer Paul Telford, aged 35, looked incredulous as a county court judge awarded £15,600 damages to his retired neighbour Paul Bray, aged 62.

Mr Telford appeared close to tears as his barrister Philip Walling described the penalty as "astonishing compared with the usual £500 to £1,000". Mr Bray and his wife Mary slipped away after speaking briefly of their hopes of "going home to peace and quiet, a good night's sleep and a nice cup of tea".

The fate of Flossie, a 95kg Vietnamese pot-bellied sow, is undecided. Mr Recorder Julian Hallam gave Mr Telford two months to move the animal from the scene of the six-year battle between neighbouring luxury bungalows in Tynemouth.

The judge dismissed entirely the picture painted in court of Mr Bray as an obsessive and jealous man who was supposed to have hit back with gallons of dumped wallpaper paste and nuisance calls. He said: "Mr and Mrs Bray could not sleep or enjoy normal lives."

Mrs Bray's graphic account of Flossie's squeals, pungent dung and ability to attract rats and flies convinced the judge.

Mr Telford, a bachelor, said after the judgment: "I will miss Flossie so much, she has been such a good friend. I just want to cry."

Lords rebuff divorce bill

Michael White

THE Government last week suffered another rebuff over the Lord Chancellor's Family Law Bill when a cross-party alliance of peers voted to allow pensions to be split between couples when they divorce.

Ministers have yet to decide whether to risk reversing the 178 to 150 vote majority when the Bill reaches the Commons. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, suggested the Government would seek to reverse the crushing defeat. He said he would go ahead with his plans to publish a consultative green paper in the summer.

But the Lords verdict was welcomed by the Law Society and other bodies as likely to save many divorced people — mostly women who stand to share their ex-husbands' company pension rights — from fear and poverty in old age.

The former ministers Lord Boardman, Lord Simon and Lord Boyd-Carpenter were among the rebels, as was Lord Griffiths, the ardent Methodist who ran Lady Thatcher's Downing Street think-tank. Baroness O'Cathain and Lady Gardner of Parkes also voted with Labour, as did the Liberal Democrats' Lady Seear.

The Government survived by 118 votes to 65 an attempt led by the former Tory leader of the Lords, Baroness Young, to remove the concept of no-fault divorce from the Bill. She warned that no-fault would undermine individual responsibility and send a very bad signal to the young.

In Brief

LORD MACKAY, the Lord Chancellor, is to introduce tough new laws to plug loopholes which allow people with lavish lifestyles or overseas assets to fund cases with legal aid.

MOHAMED Al Fayed launched his new media company, Liberty Publishing, with the resurrection of Punch magazine. But he will not be going ahead with a new mid-market national newspaper, despite preparation of dummies.

THE NEW Statesman magazine is to relaunch under the ownership of Geoffrey Robinson, the millionaire Labour MP.

THE OPEN University warned that it will be forced to reduce student intake by 15 per cent next year as a result of a £6 million cut in its grant.

THE BRITISH Museum announced the award of £30 million of lottery money from the Millennium Commission towards its redevelopment plan.

THE ROYAL Opera House's £213 million redevelopment scheme was thrown into chaos when Westminster council rejected the plan. This embarrassed the Arts Council, which had agreed to hand over £20 million on the assumption that the revised scheme would get permission.

SANDRA GREGORY, an English teacher aged 30, was jailed for 25 years for drug trafficking in Thailand.

JONATHAN AITKEN, the former chief secretary to the Treasury, has apologised to Parliament for failing to register a £10,000 directorship with Astra Defence Systems Ltd, the company being investigated for sending arms to Iran via Singapore.

RICHARD RYDER, chief whip for most of John Major's premiership, became the 52nd Tory MP to announce he will not contest his seat at the next election.

THE SOLICITOR who represented the serial killer, Fred West, has been cleared of trying to make money by selling his client's life story but was suspended from practice for a year for bringing his profession into disrepute.

CAROLINE BEALE, accused of murdering her new-born baby in a New York hotel room, was due to return to Britain this week after striking a deal with the US prosecuting authorities.

MORE THAN 300 police and 1,000 security officers and bailiffs took a whole day to evict fewer than 30 people from four protest camps on the route of the Newbury bypass in Berkshire.

Schools face curriculum reforms

Donald MacLeod

AN ATTEMPT to restore Britain's competitive edge with the most radical overhaul of education and training since the war is to be proposed to ministers by Sir Ron Dearing, the Government's chief curriculum adviser.

His forthcoming review of the curriculum for 16-19-year-olds reveals he has gone much further than expected in calling for a national framework of awards to span the full range of academic and vocational courses in schools, as well as qualifications gained through on-the-job training.

Proposals to stretch the brightest students, including reviving S level, are matched by new approaches for the 20 per cent of pupils who leave school without passing English and maths at GCSE.

Sir Ron is consulting widely among teachers, employers, and politicians on both sides of Parliament to build support before delivering his report to Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, later this month.

He will stress the need for stability by retaining the present A levels, GCSEs and vocational courses, marshalled into a more coherent system of national awards. Teachers' leaders have already welcomed Sir Ron's gradualist approach. But the effect of the cumulative changes he is proposing will amount to an education and training revolution.

The report attempts to broaden the range of subjects taken in the sixth form, as urged by schools. Employers' demands for better communication and maths skills have also been built into the new framework.

A series of measures designed to boost the standing of vocational and practical courses include renaming General National Vocational Qualifications as Applied A levels, merging exam boards and vocational bodies, and relaunching the discredited Youth Training scheme.

Students would be able to follow any of three distinct pathways — academic, through GCSEs to A levels; applied, through GNVQ intermediate and advanced levels, leading either to higher education or to employment; and vocational, doing job-specific National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) while in employment or in Youth Traineeships, which could work up to a Modern Apprenticeship.

Young people would be able to change pathways and combine courses from different pathways as they rose through four levels: Entry, Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced.

Recommendations include:

❏ Advanced National Diploma awarded for two A levels or vocational equivalent; Intermediate National Diploma for five GCSE grade Cs or equivalent.
❏ New Baccalaureate-style National General Diploma at 18 covering four areas of study.
❏ Cutting the number of A level syllabuses. "Easy" subjects to be toughened.
❏ Relaunching Youth Training with Youth Traineeships.
❏ Relaunching National Record of Achievement to be used as jobs CV and lifelong learning planner.
❏ New AS level to form first half of A level and allow students a broader curriculum.
❏ Reviving S level to stretch brightest candidates.



Cumbrian residents flock to admire an art installation in Mungrisdale, one of the offerings of Visual Arts in the North. Andy Goldsworthy has created two dry-stone sheepfolds in an isolated valley near Keswick and plans to make 98 more folds in Cumbria by December 31, 2000 PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND

Writs follow Iraq arms trial

Richard Norton-Taylor

SENIOR Customs and Foreign Office officials have been served with High Court writs alleging conspiracy and abuse of authority in an arms-to-Iraq trial.

The move follows sharp criticism by Sir Richard Scott of the way officials improperly interfered with the course of justice in a Customs prosecution of three men charged with trying to sell 200 Sterling sub machine-guns to Iraq, via Jordan.

In what Sir Richard described as "disgraceful" conduct, the officials conspired in 1985 to persuade staff from the Iraqi and Jordanian embassies in London not to appear as witnesses on behalf of Major Reginald Dunk and Alexander Schlesinger, two arms dealers, and James Edmiston, former owner of the Sterling arms company.

The Scott inquiry heard how Patrick Nixon, a senior FO diplomat, told a colleague, Carsten Pigott: "I confess to innocent reluctance to connive at impeding the course of justice!" He was replying to a note sent by Mr Pigott about approaches made to a senior Iraqi embassy official.

Mr Pigott subsequently told the inquiry he did not intend to impede the course of justice and that he was acting "at the behest of the prosecution authority". Sir Richard describes the actions of the FO officials involved as "thoroughly reprehensible".

Mr Edmiston was acquitted by an Old Bailey jury in 1985. Mr Dunk and Mr Schlesinger were fined a total of £23,000 but their convictions were quashed last year in light of the Scott inquiry evidence.

Gavin McFarlane of Titmuss, Sainer, Dechert, lawyers for Mr Edmiston, served writs alleging "conspiracy and misfeasance in public office" against the Customs & Excise Commissioners, the Foreign Office, and Mr Pigott. Mr McFarlane refers in the writ to the appeal court judgment by Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice, who said "the machinations" in the case "constituted such an interference with the justice process as to amount to an abuse of it".

The Crown Prosecution Service has passed papers on the case to the Metropolitan police.

Black soldiers 'suffer racial abuse'

Gary Younge

BLACK soldiers were frequently subjected to racist abuse, leaked findings from a two-year investigation by the Commission for Racial Equality revealed on Monday.

But the Ministry of Defence insisted that despite recent accusations of discrimination in the forces, racism was not "widespread". It has, however, accepted the investigation's general conclusions.

An army spokesman said: "It is an area where you can never do too much. But, like any other sector of society, it is a fact of life. The issue is how much you can do to put procedures and systems in place to effect the necessary attitude.

"Like the police we have ethnic minority focus officers nominated at certain army career centres and publish recruitment literature in Urdu, Bengali, Hindi and Gujarati."

Yet despite the army's efforts to step up recruitment from the ethnic minorities the numbers joining the army dropped by more than 25 per cent last year. Figures from 1994/95 revealed the number totalled just 1 per cent in the navy, 0.9 per cent in the army and 0.5 in the RAF, compared with an ethnic minority population of 6 per cent in Britain.

Its investigation was prompted by the case of Jake Malcolm, a corporal in the Royal Engineers, whose transfer to the Household Cavalry was turned down when it was discovered that he was black. In 1993 he was awarded £6,500 for injured feelings.

Key sporting events saved for the nation

BRITAIN'S sporting crown jewels are to remain on mainstream television, despite the increasing financial muscle of satellite broadcasters, the Government conceded this week, *writes Andrew Culf.*

Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary, said eight "listed" events would remain universally available to viewers and listeners.

The Government retreated over the list after the Lords dealt it a 117-vote defeat last month to ensure subscription channels could not buy up coverage. Under the terms of the compromise, the events will be available to terrestrial and satellite broadcasters on a non-exclusive basis.

The events are the FA Cup and Scottish FA Cup finals, soccer World Cup, Olympics, cricket Test matches involving England, the Grand National, the Derby and Wimbledon finals weekend.

The Government's amendment would guarantee coverage on terrestrial channels, while satellite and pay-per-view services could offer alternative or fuller coverage.

Despite the concession, the Government found itself heading for a fresh collision course with a Lords amendment which would guarantee highlights for the BBC or ITV of non-listed events shown live on Rupert Murdoch's Sky Sports channel.

The handover to China may be 16 months off, but for the colony's élite it is already a fact of life: businessmen who once courted the British Conservative party are now dealing with the communists of Beijing. And as **Andrew Higgins** reports, those reluctant to embrace the new order are advised to take the first plane out

Tycoons turn their backs on Britain

ON THE 25th floor of the knife-edged Bank of China skyscraper, icon of Hong Kong's new establishment, Michael Heseltine is still hanging on, albeit banished to a corner behind the door. Slightly more visible is Margaret Thatcher, though even she seems diffident and on the defensive, her photograph dwarfed by large portraits of Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong's premier for 27 years, at the far end of the executive suite. Such are the eclectic but unambiguous mementoes of power and money in the final days of the British Empire.

The pictures — as well as a superb collection of Chinese antiques worth millions of pounds — belong to T T Tsui, Hong Kong tycoon, patron of the arts, friend to the V&A, keen-eyed connoisseur of politics and porcelain, schmoozer *sans pareil*. He is chairman of Citybus, which runs buses in London as well as Hong Kong, and a string of other firms. Most important, though, is the nexus of political and economic clout represented by his newest endeavour, New China Hong Kong Group.

When John Major made his first trip to Hong Kong as Prime Minister in September 1991, Tsui counted himself among a select group of local millionaires ready to prove their allegiance with more than mere words. He is said to have donated $150,000, small change for a man who can drop millions in an afternoon at an antique auction. (He does not deny the payments, but will not discuss them either: "I am unable to answer.")

The Conservative party, eager to keep such funds flowing, set up an offshore bank account in Jersey to funnel donations from sympathetic overseas moguls. To show his appreciation — and encourage further largesse ahead of the 1992 general election — Major slipped away from an official reception during his 1991 Hong Kong trip to spend one of only two evenings in the colony cloistered with friendly tycoons.

Major was in Hong Kong again this week. But with only 484 days left before the five-starred red flag of the People's Republic of China ousts the Union Jack, most magnates have found more fruitful ways to spend both their time and their money. Invited to meet Major, T T Tsui sent his regrets: "I've got a meeting in Beijing," he explained before his departure for the Chinese capital. "I won't be back in time."

Also out of town — in Cuba, on business — is David Tang, flamboyant founder of the China Club, an upstart rival to the venerable, musty and increasingly marginal colonial-era Hong Kong Club. "British politicians are probably irrelevant as far as the majority of the people in Hong Kong are concerned," he said.

Instead of the Conservative party, it is the Communist party in Beijing that can now enjoin displays of devotion. From an ox-blood leather armchair commanding a master-of-the-universe view of Hong Kong, Tsui offered this advice to the Prime Minister: "Whether or not he wants to hand over sovereignty to China, this is going to happen. Just as the British left India, Singapore and Malaysia, they must leave Hong Kong. The return of Hong Kong to China is 100 per cent certain. Whether Britain co-operates or not, it will happen. China will rule Hong Kong after 1997. Britain is leaving. That is the reality."

Change may be unavoidable, but this does not make it easy. A sign of the emotion underlying what the more pragmatic accept as a *fait accompli* is a stubborn last stand being staged along the waterfront of Victoria Harbour. On Kellett Island — long since joined to the shore by landfill and shadowed by skyscrapers but still known by the name left by a vanished past — the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club wrestles with the question of how to accommodate the inevitable. "Hong Kong is going to change. Fine, let it change. Great, take down all the flags and go for new flags. Put bauhinia flowers on all the mail boxes. Let's do it," says Ian Dubin, a royalist civil servant with the Hong Kong government. "But how far are we going to take it? Is it going to be an offence to sing Rule Britannia in Wanchai, or to wear Union Jack boxer shorts?"

For government institutions such as the Royal Hong Kong Police Force and the Royal Observatory, a change of nomenclature has always been just a matter of time. Both will drop their "royal" at the stroke of midnight on June 30, 1997. Already designed for this moment is a new police emblem. The 19th century opium-trading junk will be replaced by an image of Hong Kong's business district skyline, a motif dominated by the Bank of China.

'Whether Britain co-operates or not, China will rule Hong Kong after 1997. Britain is leaving. That is the reality'

— T T Tsui

One by one, bastions of colonial society have judged it wise in recent months to sever their connection with the British monarchy ahead of Britain's formal retreat next year. The Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, holder of a horse-racing franchise worth more than $9 billion a year, has proved itself more than worthy of the new, rapidly approaching order. Among local brahmins holding the coveted rank of steward is Larry Yung, the son of China's pre-eminent "red capitalist" vice-president, Rong Yiren, and the chairman of CITIC-Pacific, China's biggest state conglomerate in the colony.



Parting glances . . . Hong Kong's governor Chris Patten, left, and John Major inspect an architectural model in a colony where UK politicians are no longer the toast of the town PHOTOGRAPH: VINCENT YU

The Jockey Club's governing council not only voted to drop its royal appellation but did so unanimously, a display of discipline that will have comforted even the most hard-headed practitioner of democratic centralism in Beijing. The Hong Kong chapter of the RSPCA is following suit, as will the Royal Hong Kong Golf Club.

On Kellett Island, though, the R-word has proved more resilient: against all expectations, a recent general meeting of members at the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club fell just short of the 75 per cent majority needed to drop the royal tag first granted by Queen Victoria in 1895.

In an emotional debate preceding the ballot, a Shanghai-raised British lawyer offered the mocking suggestion that the club name be changed to "Humble People's Sampan Club". Most urged pragmatism, pointing out that the People's Liberation Army will soon take over control of Hong Kong's waters from the Royal Navy. One member explained that, as someone who had seen the PLA in action in Tiananmen Square, he thought it unwise to retain the royal.

Leading the campaign for change is the yacht club's commodore, Tony Scott, a colonial policeman with the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Retaining the royal, he says, would be a "dubious and hollow distinction" after 1997. "It would be extremely unwise to keep it. These people are in denial of reality. The royal is an expensive anachronism. Change is inevitable. There is no point trying to block it . . . Everyone can go off chuckling to the bar, but what worries me is that we will end up with this bloody royal albatross hanging around our neck."

Those demanding change plan to hold a second vote in coming weeks. Mr Dubin, the royalist, has written to Buckingham Palace pleading for help. He received a polite reply but no promise of redcoats to the rescue: the Queen had "taken careful note" but "would not become involved directly in a matter such as this".

Undeterred, he proposes that Deng Xiaoping be made joint patron and get his portrait put on the wall next to the Queen. "The Pax Britannica stood for 200 years. You've got 500 million people in the Commonwealth who owe a large part of whatever veneer of civilisation is upon them now to British culture," said the Canadian-born Dubin. "That is what royalty is about. It is that history, that tie. As we move into a brave new world, should we not try to keep a bit of the history? Not a lot, but just enough so as not to forget the lessons of history?"

The problem is that Beijing draws very different lessons from the same history. Britain's capture of Hong Kong in 1841 marked the start of what, from the perspective of the Chinese Communist party, was a century of weakness and shame.

Whatever China's promise to leave Hong Kong's way of life intact for at least 50 years, past dishonour must be expurgated. For the tycoons, it means another chance to cash in. "For more than 100 years the Chinese had no equality here. For more than 100 years the English had privileges in every area," says Tsui. "The changes under way now are entirely natural."

Central to such changes are companies like his own New China Hong Kong Group, a well-connected investment fund, and the emergence of a new comprador class serving Chinese, rather than British, interests. With projects ranging from property in Beijing to a toll road in Sichuan, Tsui makes no apologies for cosying up to Hong Kong's future sovereign. As well as having a seat on the standing committee of the People's Political Consultative Congress and a slot on the Hong Kong preparatory committee, he counts a dozen government agencies and ministries as partners.

For the moment, the Communist party, much like the Conservative party, does its best to nurture and reward the loyalty of the rich. It may sometimes fulminate against "money worship" and "bourgeois liberalisation", but embraces Hong Kong tycoons with gusto. "This is only natural. Hong Kong is a society where the most important thing is business," says Tsui. "This is an economic society. Without business, Hong Kong has nothing."

Early last December he crossed the border into China for a meeting in Shenzhen with the party's general-secretary, Jiang Zemin. The occasion amounted to an investiture for Hong Kong's future power élite — a final confirmation of the alliance of interests that will dominate Hong Kong after 1997. Also invited to Shenzhen were a dozen other moguls, including other erstwhile friends of the Conservatives, such as multi-billionaire Li Ka-shing and shipping magnate Tung Chee-hwa, front-runner for the post of post-1997 chief executive.

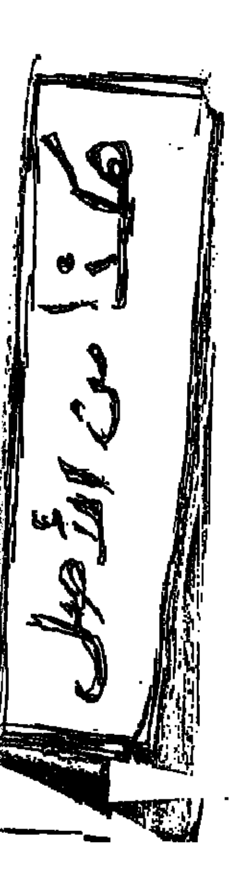
The balance of loyalty, stacked so decisively in London's favour for more than a century, began to shift the moment Britain and China signed their 1984 joint declaration. For a while, London could still claim to matter. No longer. The game is up. Adding piquant irony to this final chapter of Britain's imperial history is the role of Chris Patten. As MP for Bath, he chaired the Conservative party at a time when Hong Kong tycoons were still shovelling cash into the coffers. As governor of Hong Kong and author of modest democratic reforms, he is stigmatised by the same tycoons as a menace to society, though the wealthiest among them refrain from the pitbull polemics proferred by China's more crassly opportunistic cheerleaders in Hong Kong.

An invitation to Government House, Patten's residence since his electoral defeat at Bath, is now more a liability than an honour. A recent guide to "what's hot and what's not" in Hong Kong Tatler, bible to local high-society, advised against dining there. The hot hosts, it decreed, are people like Zhou Nan, the choleric head of China's de facto embassy, the Xinhua News Agency.

"Some people have not come to terms with reality. Individuals and organisations must all come to terms with this reality," warns Nellie Fong, a leading member of the Beijing-appointed preparatory committee and head of the Better Hong Kong Foundation, set up by a group of millionaires last year to improve Hong Kong's image. (Each founder member contributed a start-up fee of more than $600,000.) "The reality is that the British administration ends in Hong Kong on June 30, 1997. Hong Kong becomes part of China. If they cannot come to terms with this, they may just have to leave."

Another reality, however, is that Beijing frequently turns on its friends. In 1949, the Communist party devoted one of five stars on a new national flag to patriotic capitalists and spent the next three decades persecuting them. Few can now remember what the fifth star stands for.

Ms Fong has a British passport.



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Defeat for left, or a vote for change?

TWO SOCIALIST governments that have long been part of the world political equation disappeared last weekend. In Australia on Saturday, Paul Keating's Labor administration was swept away after 13 years in office. Then on Sunday Felipe González's socialist coalition lost power after a 14-year reign in Spain. Both Keating and González had been lucky to survive last time their countries went to the polls in 1993. Both have now been firmly ejected three years later, as almost all the forecasts had long predicted. Nevertheless, for Australia and for Spain important eras have ended.

Although Spain is Britain's partner in the European Union, most people in Britain probably know more about the situation in Australia. This is partly because of historic ties, but it is also because Australian Labor's success under Bob Hawke and Mr Keating has been seen as a model for the reinvention of the British Labour party. That model remains relevant in spite of Saturday's conclusive defeat. The ALP's key achievement was to know what it wanted and to take the long view about achieving it. It managed to balance liberal economics with equitable social policies at a time when global orthodoxy said this was impossible. It recognised the need for partnership with trade unions when that was out of fashion too. It put itself at the forefront of modern thinking in many fields, fiercely supporting native Australian rights, launching a cultural policy that is the envy of the world, and setting Australia on a course that could still make the nation a republic, in spite of Labor's defeat. There is much there for Britain to learn from, providing that Tony Blair allows his party to discuss it.

Like 20th century Australia, 20th century Spain has a long socialist pedigree. Just as in Australia, the left in Spain has always been indisputably the modernising force in that country's politics. That has been particularly true of the González era, which has comprised 14 of the 19 years of Spain's post-Franco democracy. The socialists have presided over the economic transformation of Spain, its reintegration into European and world structures, the historic devolution of power to the provinces and, above all, the transition from fascism to democracy, ironically under a constitutional monarchy. The fact that the right's victory causes few of the tremors that it would have provoked 20 years ago is part of the achievement.

Many will conclude that the simultaneous defeats of two of the world's more resilient leftwing governments of modern times underline a wider crisis for socialism elsewhere. A more obvious explanation for the double defeats is simply that voters were ready for a change. It is very difficult to win re-election after being in power for more than a decade. British Tories should remember that before they crow.

Gravy train on a fast track

AT LONG last, nearly a decade later than it should have done and after one of the biggest U-turns in recent memory, the Government has finally given the go-ahead for construction of the 68-mile fast railway link from London to the Channel Tunnel. Remember, a decade ago the Channel Tunnel itself was authorised by Mrs Thatcher so long as it was entirely financed by the private sector. She applied the same criterion to the building of a high-speed rail link which should have been built simultaneously (as it was in France). But, totally unsurprisingly, the private sector reckoned it couldn't make enough income from ticket sales to justify a railway needing considerable environmental safeguards, including long underground stretches.

Now the Government has relented and with all the passion of the converted is recklessly hurling subsidies at the private sector in a manner that deserves much more serious public scrutiny than it has received. The winning consortium will receive £1.4 billion of the £3 billion cost as a straight subsidy granted by the same Government that in 1990 declared that "rail must win its place in the market, not have that place bought for it by the taxpayer". How times change. On top of that, it will be given the spanking new Eurostar trains worth an estimated £450 million, an £80 million depot in West London, St Pancras station and hotel plus various other valuable assets including 120 prime acres around Kings Cross worth goodness knows what and a similar endowment of land at Stratford where a freight connection with the North will be constructed. To complete the irony it will also get Nicholas Grimshaw's stunning new international terminal at Waterloo built for £130 million (and worth more now) within budget and on time by the unfairly maligned British Rail. Unfortunately, by the time it was completed the fast rail link it was built to accommodate (which would have gone underground as it approached London) was abandoned. Why? Because Lord Parkinson, then Transport Secretary, insisted it must be built without subsidies (the same Lord Parkinson who later turned up as chairman of one of the consortia seeking huge public subsidies, but that's another story). What is disgraceful is that if today's subsidies had been available then, the high-speed rail link would by now have been completed instead of having to wait until the next century. British Rail was perfectly well equipped to build it just as the nationalised French railways have built high-speed tracks right across France

It is tempting to let the matter rest there and wait patiently until the consortium — which combines the very impressive engineering might of Ove Arup and Bechtel with the market nous of Branson — gets the damned thing built. But there is still a crucial question of public ethics. If all the extras are added in, the taxpayer will be putting up at least three-quarters of the cost of the project — or much more if you believe some of Labour's estimates — while getting nothing in return. More than that, the consortium will own the concession for 999 years as opposed to the seven-year contracts granted to privatised rail franchises. Make no mistake, this privatisation has all the hallmarks of creating another scandal in a few years' time. The Audit Commission should step in forthwith to ascertain just how much the taxpayer is being taken for a ride.

Cutting the royals down to size

ONE OF the truly difficult decisions one might be called on to make in this life is whom to side with in the forthcoming Battle of the Baubles — Charles or Diana. Does she have squatter's rights at Kensington Palace? Should she be given a palatial pile in Norfolk to compensate for the loss of Highgrove? Should he be expected to cough up for all this from his own pocket money or should the Queen dip into her hidden resources? What is it worth not to write a book? And how much is it worth for her to keep the coveted title "Her Royal Highness". The Daily Mail, blessed with an open line to Kensington Palace, was typically helpful last week in providing a detailed breakdown of Diana's modest outgoings ranging from accommodation costs (£303,978 a year) down to her taste in underwear (Donna Karan intimates etc at £4,004 a year). We are not sure where the stray £4 came from: probably VAT or a spare piece of elastic. Total annual expenditure was £751,005 a year, though the Mail thinks she would settle for a "clean-break" lump sum of £15 million.

This is a difficult area because nobody knows what the market worth of a discarded royal really is. Perhaps it is time to find out. After all, if the Government really believes that everything is more efficiently done by the private sector, why should the monarchy, which has been ossifying in the public sector for longer than any other institution, be exempt?

If royalty is to be market-tested it should also swallow the Government's other patent cure: downsizing. While the civil service and industry have been slimming down drastically, there has been an explosion of dukedoms, princes and princesses — few with anything sensible to do — which will erode the popularity of the monarchy at a time when it needs all the friends it can get. If the monarchy continues to wash its dirty linen in public it will find that its existence will increasingly be questioned. As with a company fearing a hostile take-over, it should shrink to survive. Princess Di should seize the initiative by abandoning the title HRH, the dignity of which has been eroded by her public antics. Or she should go the whole hog, like the pop idol Prince, and change her name to something which more clearly reflects her new status: the artist formerly known as Princess.

Israel's path to peace is paved with terror

David Hirst

ALL YOU need is a detonator and the scum willing to kill themselves. Thus did Israel's chief of staff last week sum up the virtual impossibility of foiling the Islamist militant prepared to commit suicide for his cause. Yet though the Israeli authorities made little secret of their fear that, after the double atrocity of a week ago, there would be more to come, the speed and devastation must have exceeded their worst fears.

All had seemed to be going as well as could be hoped for the "peace process", and the Israeli prime minister, Shimon Peres, and the PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, whose personal and political fortunes are so intimately intertwined with it.

But now both men's dreams are turning into a nightmare. Both, of course, desperately seek to preserve the peace process. Like Arafat before him, Peres needs to triumph in his elections in May in order to achieve that. The trouble now is, however, that the very methods which Peres must adopt — and insist that his peace partner adopts too — threaten to undermine them both.

Peres faces a great irony. For so long as extremists on either side have the will to act, the mechanics of the peace process itself now assist them. The perpetrators of last week's bombings came from Hebron, still outside Arafat's control altogether. But the more territory Israel cedes to Arafat's National Authority, the more territory there is for the "terrorists" to use as a haven.

The political consequences of Israel's difficulty in coping with such terror have rarely been more dangerous than they are today. Before those bombings Peres had been ahead of the Likud opposition by six points, but now they were neck and neck. Perhaps, the pollsters said, if there were no more outrages the pendulum would swing back again. But now?

After each suicide assault, Israel goes through the ritual of sealing off the occupied territories. It is both a necessary sop to Israeli opinion and a collective punishment of the Palestinians.

But until now it has always lifted the blockade in the end. For it knows that the Palestinians can no more tolerate an interminable closure than their own people can the terror. But it was becoming a vicious circle. Once the closure is lifted it enables the suicide bomber to infiltrate, but the longer it lasts the more it adds to the reservoir of terrorists, because terror feeds, not least, on the poverty and hardship the closure only serves to increase. Peres cannot but be aware of this vicious circle, But now, in announcing his "total war" on Hamas, he is resorting in apparent desperation to the long-contemplated policy of complete and permanent "separation" of Israel from the West Bank and Gaza. That is bad and contradictory enough. But, perhaps worse still, he is demanding of Arafat in the peace process the kind of action against his own people which could break him.

Since he established himself in Gaza, Arafat has undertaken campaigns of repression against Islamic militants that have earned him continuous reproaches from Palestinian, international and even Israeli human rights organisations. He has made himself the object of hatred at least as fierce as that which Peres has earned from his own extremists. When his police killed two activists in their homes, sympathisers staged demonstrations calling for his blood.

Yet even before this week's mayhem, both Israelis and Americans were demanding yet more of Arafat. Hamas is much more than its military extension. It is the whole social and religious infrastructure from which it springs, the whole climate of fervour by which it is inspired. In requiring, as he now does, that Arafat join him in his total war, Peres is clearly requiring him to strike at its political as well as military wing.

Polls do indeed show that an overwhelming majority of Palestinians oppose the terrorist strikes, largely because of the material hardships they bring in their wake. But as ever the Palestinian heart is in disagreement with the Palestinian head, and every strike is followed by unseemly rejoicing.

So in such a climate there will always be at least a minority of Palestinians with the will to go on with a terror against which, as Israel's leading commentators acknowledge, there is no real deterrent. And nothing, tragically, will keep that alive more than some of the steps which the two peace partners are now ready to take in the process.

There is Peres's threat to slow down the process itself; he has hinted that he may postpone the next stage, the Israeli army's withdrawal from Hebron. There is now the indefinite closure of the occupied territories and its economic consequences. But above all, perhaps, there is the deadly underground war between the Israeli security services and the Islamist militants. And here, Arafat relentlessly tells Peres, the Israelis only have themselves to blame.

FOR THE militants are not merely at loggerheads with Arafat. They are divided, among themselves, between the extreme and the yet more extreme. Arafat himself has made use of these divisions. In "reconciliation" talks between Hamas and his National Authority, Hamas promised a "ceasefire against the occupation authority" — provided only that Arafat "protect" their military fugitives from the Israelis.

It was the Israelis themselves who, in early January, broke this undeclared ceasefire when they booby-trapped the most wanted fugitive of all, "the Engineer" Yahya Ayyash. The latest bombings were the inevitable, promised retaliation for that. But now the "cells of Yahya Ayyash" have offered a three-month ceasefire. But the price is that Israel must cease its operations against them in both Gaza and the West Bank, and Arafat must release all the military he has just imprisoned.

But Arafat has already served notice that, on Israel's behalf, he has no choice but to strike yet harder than ever. So the militants are most unlikely to let their ceasefire run its course, and everyone now knows with what apparent ease and with what devastating effect even the minority of a divided minority, just one man with a detonator, can break it.

Crisis looms on German waterfront

Despite the rising tide of unemployment, workers at the port of Bremen remain calm. But for how long, wonders Ian Traynor

IN THE docklands of Bremen, the lights are going out. The north German port, home to a proud seafaring and shipbuilding tradition, is sunk in gloom and anger as the rising tide of German unemployment washes over the city.

"The mood is indescribable, totally miserable," says Peter, a Bremen native. "Thirty years ago this was the best place in Germany. Now it's the worst. It gets worse every year."

Peter is a joiner at Bremer Vulkan, Germany's biggest shipbuilding group which is on the brink of bankruptcy and recently filed for protection from its creditors. The group employs 23,000 in Germany, including more than 2,000 in Bremen. They've been promised their wages for the next three months. But Peter is not waiting.

"I've just handed in my notice," he explains, "that way I might find something else before the trouble really starts when this place closes down." He points across to the north Bremen dole office handily situated opposite the Vulkan yards. "When they pay these people off, there's going to be unrest and that'll be the first target. They'll storm that place."

In its death throes, Bremen resembles a German Tyneside or Clydeside. Rock stars are organising benefit concerts for the Vulkan workers, actors offer their services. The other day the city's shops closed for the morning in solidarity with the threatened workers.

Last week, thousands of workers demonstrated across Germany's north coast shipbuilding region to demand the rescue of Vulkan.

Workers gathered at the gates of Bremer Vulkan's Neue Jadewerft shipyard in Wilhelmshaven in the first of a series of protests organised by the engineering union. But even before the Vulkan débâcle, Bremen was western Germany's unemployment blackspot.

Together with the adjoining port of Bremerhaven, the city forms the smallest of Germany's 16 federal states. Its jobless rate — 13.6 per cent last month, almost 20 per cent in Bremerhaven — puts it in a league of its own in what was West Germany.

These are the official rates. Real unemployment is higher. While the government in Bonn huffs and puffs about unemployment being its "number one priority" and issues blueprints to halve it by the year 2000, the "two-thirds society" has already arrived in Bremen. It will not be leaving soon.

"The economy is very poor. We've never had a situation as bad as this before," admits Uwe Nullmeyer of the city's chamber of commerce. "It's astonishingly peaceful and calm here, all things considered. But that doesn't mean it can't change."

The chamber has just conducted a survey which found that every second Bremen firm plans to lay off more employees this year.

The picture is similar elsewhere. Unemployment nationally broke through the 4 million barrier last month to almost 11 per cent and a national business survey found that firms, embarked on "rationalisation and productivity" drives, intend to shed another half a million jobs this year.

Last month the government issued its 50-point plan which it says is to bring the figures down to 2 million by the end of the century. Bankers, businessmen, and politicians just laugh.

"We're not on the way from 4 to 2 million jobless, we're on the way from 4 to 5 million," said Count Otto von Lambsdorff, liberal MP and economics guru, last week.

"Five million would be very bitter. It could become explosive," warns Mr Nullmeyer.

WHILE the government promotes its schemes, it is not the far right, but the opposition Social Democrats (SPD) who have seized on the cheap and nasty issue of foreigners as one possible cure to the disease.

Last month Rudolf Scharping, the SPD floor leader, asked why 800,000 foreigners were given work permits in Germany with the jobless rate soaring.

His boss, Oskar Lafontaine, has called for a halt to immigration of ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe — running at about 200,000 a year — because of the jobs crisis.

Away from the nationalist far right, such talk is seen as ruthless and dangerous electioneering and all the evidence suggests that the work permits given to foreigners are for jobs that Germans would not dream of doing.

"Without our good friends the Poles, we couldn't bring the harvest in," says a north Bavarian vintner. "We had a boy from the village working here two years ago. We had to tell him to work a bit faster. He didn't show up the next day and has been out of work ever since."

But anti-foreigner bashing goes down well among the swelling ranks of the jobless.

"It's only logical, isn't it?" says Peter in Bremen. "We can't afford to take them. All of the east is coming in here, most of them can't even speak German. When I go down to the dole office next week, I'll wonder whether I'm in my home town or in Istanbul."

In the spotless unemployment office, the human traffic is constant and heavy. It includes many non-Germans.

There are 40,000 Turks living in Bremen, a city of half a million. "The Turks are fully accepted here today. There's no problem. But if Vulkan closes down, the situation could become explosive and people could turn against foreigners," says Mr Nullmeyer.

Peter just shrugs and says he has nothing against foreigners. "Look, I'm 48. It's the worst age you can be, too old to get a job and too young to get a pension. We can't go on like this. We don't have jobs for ourselves; so how can we give them jobs?"

In Brief

CUNARD, the luxury shipping line that owns the QE2, was put up for sale after its owner, Trafalgar House, was taken over in a $1.38 billion bid from Kvaerner. Its new Norwegian owners said it would sell Cunard if the price was right.

THE BANK of England is planning to boost its supervisory arm following an in-depth probe by consultancy firm Arthur Andersen into its regulatory structure following the Barings collapse. Meanwhile, reports that Nick Leeson, the man who brought down Barings bank, controls $35 million in secret accounts in Germany have been passed to the bank's administrators Ernst & Young, but have not been confirmed.

BRITAIN'S first surplus with Europe in more than two years helped narrow the trade gap in December, according to the Government.

ORANGE, the mobile phones firm, has promised a bonanza to investors after setting the price of its shares up to a fifth lower than market analysts suggested they were worth.

UK FRAUDSTERS enjoyed a bumper 1995, according to figures from accountancy firm KPMG, with the total value of charges jumping nearly 52 per cent to $722 million. There were 76 recorded cases, up from 74 in 1994.

BARCLAYS Bank broke the $3 billion barrier for the first time to earn what chief executive Martin Taylor described as "a return that is very high by historical standards".

SHERATON Hotels is taking over one of the last family-owned hotels in London, The Park Lane in Piccadilly, for $69 million.

POLYGRAM has agreed to take a large stake in the Sundance Channel, Robert Redford's new channel for showcasing independent movies.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates March 4	Sterling rates February 26
Australia	2.0097-2.0137	2.0343-2.0384
Austria	15.86-15.88	15.67-15.70
Belgium	46.34-46.44	45.84-45.94
Canada	2.0948-2.0978	2.1178-2.1208
Denmark	8.70-8.72	8.61-8.63
France	7.73-7.74	7.66-7.67
Germany	2.2656-2.2687	2.2299-2.2330
Hong Kong	11.81-11.82	11.90-11.91
Ireland	0.9704-0.9730	0.9673-0.9699
Italy	2,384-2,368	2,397-2,401
Japan	160.45-160.71	160.57-160.84
Netherlands	2.5246-2.5278	2.4969-2.5002
New Zealand	2.2683-2.2715	2.2731-2.2765
Norway	9.80-9.82	9.74-9.75
Portugal	234.19-234.81	231.78-232.40
Spain	190.89-191.18	187.83-188.11
Sweden	10.41-10.43	10.35-10.37
Switzerland	1.8356-1.8384	1.8141-1.8169
USA	1.5284-1.5294	1.5400-1.5410
ECU	1.2171-1.2186	1.2130-2.2142

FTSE100 Share Index up 64.4 at 3768.6. FTSE [illegible] Index up 40.9 at 4244.9. Gold down $6.80 at $[illegible]

Meet the 15 billion dollar man

Mark Tran

WARREN BUFFETT, the investment guru from Omaha, Nebraska, has overtaken Microsoft's Bill Gates to become the world's richest businessman.

Mr Buffett breezed past his fellow billionaire and friend after a surge in shares of Berkshire Hathaway, the investment vehicle he controls. Shares in Berkshire Hathaway have risen by more than half in the past year to $34,700 each.

With the 479,202 shares he owns, the "Oracle of Omaha" is now worth $16.6 billion. Anyone who entrusted $10,000 to him when he started investing would now be worth $95 million.

Last July, Forbes magazine declared Mr Gates, the computer software king, the world's richest businessman, with a net worth of $12.9 billion, with Mr Buffett in second place at $10.7 billion. Both men have since seen their holdings rise, but Mr Buffett's have grown faster than those of his golfing friend.

The gyrations of a George Soros, or the assaults by corporate raiders like Carl Icahn, are alien to Mr Buffett, who has attained sage-like status — not through speculation, but by buying large stakes in companies and holding on to them. His reluctance to sell has become almost a statement of principle.

He invests in companies with a proven track record for making profits, and especially ones that have dominant and enduring franchises with "moats around them", such as Coca-Cola, Gillette, the Washington Post, and Capital Cities/ABC, recently acquired by Disney.

Mr Buffett's long-term perspective is reflected in one of the aphorisms sprinkled through the whimsical, and decidedly not glossy, Berkshire Hathaway annual reports: "You should invest in a business that even a fool can run, because some day a fool will."

In keeping with his belief in knowing about what you invest in, Mr Buffett gives a wide berth to technology companies like Intel or Microsoft, which performed so well last year. Berkshire Hathaway's nondescript office buildings in Omaha do not even have computers.

Mr Buffett has not been infallible. USAir, British Airways' American partner and America's sixth largest airline, has been a disappointment. Salomon Brothers, the investment bank he helped to rescue after a bond trading scandal, has been another below-par performer.

But these are merely blemishes on an astonishingly successful record.

Despite his wealth, Mr Buffett, aged 65, still lives in the house he bought 38 years ago, and mixes with people he befriended in the distant past.

'Invest in a business that even a fool can run, because some day a fool will', is the philosophy of Warren Buffett

Oil giants strike pact

Chris Barrie

EUROPE'S oil refining and marketing business faces its biggest shake-up in decades following an announcement last week that BP and Mobil are to shed up to 3,000 jobs by pooling many of their downstream assets.

The partnership will create a joint venture with sales of more than $20 billion and assets worth $5 billion, operating across the European Union, Turkey, Cyprus, eastern Europe, Switzerland and Russia west of the Urals.

The venture takes the form of partnerships in fuels and lubricants and includes the plant and equipment needed to make and distribute oil products across Europe.

The job losses and other restructuring measures will cost $400 million pre-tax over two years, to be shared between the two oil groups in proportion to their interests in the joint venture.

Speaking in London and flanked by BP executives, Lucio Noto, Mobil chairman and chief executive officer, said savings in excess of $400 million a year should be achievable once the downstream operations had been combined. The venture should be at full speed by 1998.

By combining their activities, BP and Mobil will benefit from economies of scale. The fuels and lubricants businesses in each country will enjoy higher market shares and better brand awareness than that achievable by each company on its own.

Washington Revokes Aid Funds to Bogotá

Pierre Thomas and Ann Devroy

THE CLINTON administration, charging that the Colombian government is infested with narcotics corruption, last week revoked its eligibility for most foreign aid and United States support for loans.

In a related decision the administration concluded that Mexico had "fully cooperated" with U.S. anti-drug efforts despite considerable recent evidence that it remains a major transit country for narcotics.

President Clinton, disregarding concerns voiced by some of his advisers that the Colombian government might react angrily and refuse all future cooperation, determined that Colombian President Ernesto Samper's administration had impeded international drug fighting efforts and seemed beholden to drug dealers.

Senior Clinton administration officials charged that Samper's presidential campaign had received money from the Cali cartel, that his administration had actively worked against the anti-drug efforts of the Colombian federal police and had teamed with "corrupt" members of the Colombian congress to thwart key narcotics legislation.

"It is crystal clear . . . that narcotics interests have gained an unprecedented foothold in Colombia, undermining much of the progress that Colombia's most motivated public servants would have hoped to have made," said Assistant Secretary of State Robert S. Gelbard.

The Colombian national police has attempted to make progress and the nation's prosecutor general is investigating cartel influence in government, but Gelbard said these ". . . efforts have been undercut at every turn by a government and legislature not only plagued by corruption, but which are fostering corruption in order to protect themselves."

The verdict on Mexico was far more restrained, even though it remains a major source of cocaine, heroin, marijuana and methamphetamine entering the United States, according to U.S. law enforcement agencies. A number of key administration aides had argued that a strong stand against Mexico could fracture relations with an economically weak but proudly nationalistic neighbor. "We feel, that while there is a great deal that remains to be done, the cooperation between our governments unequivocally improved during '95," Gelbard said, referring to Mexico.

Clinton made the decisions on Friday last week, administration officials said, following contentious interagency deliberations that reflected the president's sensitivity to Republican election year criticism that he is soft on crime and drugs.

Clinton and some of his senior advisers debated over whether sanctioning Colombia could cause the demise of the already embattled Samper government and whether that was a worthy goal. "At the end of the day the security of the American people was at stake," said Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, director of the White House drug control office.

On Mexico, officials said that some of Clinton's aides offered the "political case" that Mexico should be decertified and then given a waiver as "a signal" of Clinton's anti-drug commitment. However, the prevailing view held that Mexico presents the opposite challenge than Colombia because the Mexican government has done more, not less, to control international drug trafficking and that there were substantial foreign policy reasons for Mexico to retain its status.

Under the law, the president is required to notify Congress by March 1 whether countries receiving U.S. aid are cooperating with international drug control efforts. Countries that are "certified" continue to receive their aid. Those who fail the certification test are denied most aid, and the United States is required to oppose any loans to that country by multilateral lending institutions like the International Monetary Fund. The president can also impose trade sanctions.

As an alternative, a president may also find that a country is not cooperating fully but then grant a national interest waiver, which allows the country to retain aid.

JOINING Colombia on the list of pariah nations were Syria, Nigeria, Iran, Burma and Afghanistan. The nations receiving a national interests waiver were Lebanon, Paraguay and Pakistan.

Although decertified, Colombia will continue to receive U.S. support for its anti-drug efforts. Colombia receives little U.S. economic aid, but decertification could affect investment by U.S. corporations there.

Douglas Farah in Bogotá writes: The Clinton administration's decision to disqualify Colombia as a partner in the fight against drug trafficking further sullies the already tarnished image of a nation that prides itself on being one of the hemisphere's most stable democracies.

Although it carries little immediate economic impact, the decision exacerbated strained relations between the United States and the government of President Samper.

"We put the the money and the deaths in the drug war," Samper said in a national broadcast. "And others reserve the right to sit and judge us."

The decision is a severe setback for Samper, who had lobbied hard not to lose U.S. approval, and it is likely, over time, to further weaken his already fragile political base. Samper has been charged with four crimes, based on allegations by senior campaign officials that he solicited and received some $6 million from the Cali cocaine cartel for his 1994 campaign. Samper has repeatedly denied the charges.

The Colombian Congress, which came under sharp U.S. criticism because of widespread corruption, is to decide the fate of the president.

The decertification is the latest chapter in Colombia's swift fall from grace. For most of the last two decades, until Samper took office in August 1994, Colombia was viewed by successive U.S. administrations as an indispensable ally in fighting drugs. During that time, Colombia routinely received certification, usually accompanied by glowing praise for its courage in fighting the criminal syndicates.

In addition, the United States has poured hundreds of millions of dollars in anti-narcotics, military and judicial aid into Colombia since 1989.

U.S. officials in Washington and diplomats here said they expect Samper to use the decision to fan the flames of nationalism in a nation that believes its international image has unfairly been tied to drug trafficking for two decades. Foreign Minister Rodrigo Pardo immediately blasted the U.S. decision as "unacceptable."

Political analysts and diplomats said here said the strategy of counterattacking with a nationalist campaign could give Samper a brief political lift. But they said it likely would be short-lived if the business community, which has already asked Samper to step aside, began exerting more pressure.

Troops secure a field of heroin poppies in Colombia's southern Huila region, before having it destroyed by spray planes. But the U.S. says Bogotá isn't doing enough in the war against drugs PHOTO: JON MITCHELL

U.S. to Help Safeguard Nuclear Materials

R. Jeffrey Smith

THE Clinton administration fears that nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union remain "very vulnerable" to theft by terrorists or rogue nations and plans to spend $330 million on new security measures to help prevent such thefts over the next six years, a senior Energy Department official said last week.

The aim of the increased U.S. effort is to assist authorities in seven former Soviet republics to develop and install modern surveillance and monitoring equipment for use at an estimated 40 to 50 sites on their territory where such sensitive materials are stored, Deputy Secretary Charles B. Curtis said.

Explaining that he visited several of the sites last year and found antiquated security measures consisting largely of "guards, guns and gates," Curtis said the task of upgrading this security will take years. "We are going to have to be lucky" to complete the job before a major theft occurs, Curtis said.

Curtis said that his department forecasts that nations in the Middle East will be flush with as much as $1 trillion in additional cash during the next two decades as oil provides a growing share of the world's energy supply. "That type of wealth can buy a lot of mischief," he added.

Iran was angling to obtain the stockpile of highly enriched uranium that the administration purchased from Kazakhstan in 1994 and shipped to Tennessee, Curtis said. He declined to identify other possible purchasers by name, but said Washington had ample "reason to believe that [similar material in poorly protected sites] is at risk to . . . the usual suspects" in the region.

So far, the administration has agreed with the seven former Soviet republics — Belarus, Latvia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan — to develop improved security measures at around 70 percent of the nuclear material storage sites, Curtis said. It is angling to strike agreements in the next year or two that will account for the remainder. As a result, U.S. spending on the effort jumped from $2 million in fiscal 1994 to $70 million this year, and is scheduled to be increased next year to slightly less than $100 million, Department of Energy officials said.

But roughly two-thirds of the nuclear storage sites have yet to install any new security measures and U.S. officials have found that officials in Moscow and other capitals are reluctant to let Americans into the formerly secret sites. Moscow has also slowed progress by refusing to sign an agreement with Washington that would allow Russian officials to disclose sensitive information on nuclear materials without fear of government prosecution.

The program has picked up steam partly because the Energy Department last year shifted its focus to ease the security concerns of the former Soviet republics and increase their participation. Previously, the department tried to convince the managers of these sites to install U.S. equipment, paid for by Washington.

Nato Eyes Balkans Exit

Rick Atkinson in Brussels

NATO faces a serious internal split over the size and shape of a successor military force that may be needed to preserve stability in Bosnia once the current peacekeeping operation ends, alliance officials said last week.

Although Operation Joint Endeavor is only in the third month of a deployment intended to last a year, the problem of how to exit Bosnia without plunging the country back into chaos is emerging as one of the toughest issues confronting alliance planners.

"The whole question of what happens at the end of 12 months is now a very uncomfortable subject," said one senior official at NATO's headquarters here. "There's a potential for a big split between the Americans and some of the other allies."

For reasons both political and military, the Clinton administration has insisted that NATO's intervention must end no later than December 20, 1996, precisely a year after the alliance took over peacekeeping duties from a beleaguered U.N. contingent. Facing a reelection challenge in November, President Clinton is adamant about keeping the one-year pledge he made to a skeptical public and Congress, according to U.S. officials.

"We agreed on a year," Robert Hunter, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, said. "We went in together, and we're going to leave together."

But several allies have quietly begun questioning whether a calendar-driven endgame is prudent and whether NATO should contemplate a successor force to safeguard whatever stability the Western alliance establishes this year. NATO sources said the Dutch, Danes and Norwegians have raised the issue.

And British Prime Minister John Major, whose 13,000-troop Bosnian contingent is second in size only to the Americans' 20,000, recently voiced doubts about whether the allotted time will suffice and suggested that alternatives should be considered.





Flotilla Honors Dead Cuban Exiles

William Booth

IN A defiant, emotional act to honor their four dead comrades, shot down over the Florida Strait on February 24 by Cuban MiGs, a group of anti-Castro pilots returned last Saturday to the stormy skies off the coast of Cuba to scatter white flowers on a watery blue tomb.

But a flotilla of civilian boats headed for the same spot was forced to turn back because of the severe weather.

As eight planes flew circles a few hundred feet above the heaving seas, the founder of Brothers to the Rescue and a survivor of the MiG attack, Jose Basulto, said in a quick crackling radio interview with reporters in a press plane, "We had to come back. We had to say our prayers for our brothers."

The planes flew about 20 miles off the coast of Cuba, in international waters in an area near where they say last month's deadly attack took place. But this time they were protected by an armada of U.S. Coast Guard and Navy ships and aircraft. U.S. officials said there was no sign of Cuban President Fidel Castro's military in the area.

Basulto, though, said the air traffic controllers in Havana radioed taunts and insults. "They gave me some of the best of their new revolutionary Spanish," he said.

The Castro regime applauded the Clinton administration's decision to send U.S. military to accompany the pilots and prevent them from entering Cuban airspace. On two occasions, once last summer and in January, Brothers' planes have flown over Havana to throw anti-Castro leaflets from their planes. Although the Cuban government charged that they shot down the planes inside Cuban airspace, the Brothers — backed by U.S. government statements — said they were over international waters.

And so what could have been a confrontational — and perhaps deadly — international incident was instead sad but peaceful, except for the pounding weather of high winds and rain squalls, which also forced more than half of the scheduled planes back to safe harbors.

As the smoke from blood orange flares dropped by the pilots rose in the wind, and as shafts of late afternoon sun illuminated the clouds, Basulto and the priests aboard his Cessna Skymaster read a poem over the radio written by Pablo Morales, one of the four killed by the Cuban MiGs, and a man who himself fled Cuba in one of the thousands of rickety rafts two years ago.

It is hard, perhaps, for an outsider to understand the significance of the Florida Strait. For if Cubans in Miami and on the island are divided by ideology and wealth and government, they are also separated by these waters — a 90-mile passage between two worlds, across which hundreds of thousands have fled and probably thousands have drowned.

Earlier in the day, at the Brothers to the Rescue hangar north of Miami, a group of Cuban American youth were handing out postcards, addressed to Clinton and urging tighter sanctions against the Castro government. The image on the card was the same one shown over and over here, that of a black trail of smoke — one of the downed planes — rising above the azure waters of the Florida Strait. The picture, shot by a tourist on a cruise ship, causes people in Miami, many of whom crossed these waters, to weep openly.



Inconsolable . . . Mirta Costa, mother of one of the four lost pilots, weeps at Miami's Orange Bowl stadium PHOTOGRAPH: MARTA LAVANDIER

"The sea is our Berlin Wall," said Luis Hernandez, a friend of one of the downed pilots, who clutched a Bible and waved as the Brothers to the Rescue mounted their planes to fly to the commemorative site.

At the end of the day, Basulto and another pilot returned to Miami and flew above the Orange Bowl, where an estimated 50,000 people had gathered for a somber memorial service. As the planes appeared, thousands raised their hands skyward and roared their approval. A chant arose of "Libertad." Liberty.

As dusk settled above the stadium, thousands of Cuban and American flags waved. The crowd was dressed for a funeral, most in black or wearing black arm bands. The tropical pop singer and Cuban American, Gloria Estefan, who has raised money for the Brothers, arrived with her family and was escorted to meet with the families of the victims.

Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Florida, and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, R-Florida, both Cuban Americans, ran across the field holding hands and waving to the crowd. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine K. Albright, with an entourage, emerged from the tunnel from the locker rooms usually reserved for the University of Miami Hurricanes football team.

U.S. Bill on Cuba Angers Canadians

Anne Swardson in Toronto

THE relative harmony of Canada's relations with the United States has long been marked by a glaring exception: Cuba.

Unimpeded by the U.S. embargo, more than 100,000 Canadian tourists fly to Cuba's beaches every winter, where they can drink Canadian beer at their hotels, and dozens of Canadian businesses sell to or buy from Cuba. Tobacco stores here prominently feature Cuban cigars; the largest foreign investor in Cuba is a Canadian company. The two nations enjoy full diplomatic relations.

So it was with anger and frustration that Canada responded to anti-Cuba legislation agreed last week by congressional negotiators and the White House. The bill would allow litigation against Canadian and other foreign firms that do business with Cuba, subject to presidential waiver, and potentially restrict entry into the United States by executives of those companies.

The feeling here is that the United States is imposing its own political agenda on third countries whose tourists and businesses were acting in full compliance with their own laws. Sympathy was expressed over the shootdown of two private American planes and the loss of four lives, but Canadian officials implied that it was not their problem.

"If the United States wants to get at Cuba, that's one thing," Trade Minister Art Eggleton said. "But what they are doing here is contrary to the relationship we have had with them and it is a violation of NAFTA," the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy said that Canada was not happy about being "slam-dunked" by the bill, and that he and Eggleton would take it up with their American counterparts in previously scheduled Washington meetings over the next two weeks.

"It contravenes the basic understandings our countries work on," he said. "We are working together in a lot of [forums], and all of a sudden this comes out of left — or I guess it's right — field."

The Globe and Mail of Toronto, Canada's leading newspaper, said last week that the United States "risks breaking international law." An editorial on the same bill last April called its co-sponsor, Senator Jesse Helms (Rep), "Brontosaurus from North Carolina" and said, "There is no reason on Earth why Canada should tug its forelock and, like some Caribbean fly-speck, defer to the United States on this matter."

Companies that do business with Cuba were hopeful that the Canadian government would protect their interests.

"We are very disturbed by this legislation," said James Moore, vice president for policy of the Canadian Exporters Association. "People are saying if Canada tried to enact legislation that had an extraterritorial impact on the United States, you can imagine what would happen."

"The ink won't be dry on these provisions before the international community registers that this is not acceptable," said Patrice Merrin Best, spokeswoman for Sherritt International Corp., which is involved in nickel-mining, oil, gas, tourism and agriculture in Cuba.

A Disaster Scenario to Be Avoided

COMMENT
Stephen S. Rosenfeld

ONCE AGAIN this past two weeks the United States and Cuba tangled, and both countries got off relatively easy, though not the four Cuban American pilots killed by Cuban MiGs. But the next time — and the 37-year confrontation of American power and Cuban communism virtually ensures there will be a next time — things may not go so well. We should be readier than we are.

Many people assume that the end of the Cold War changed Castro's Cuba from a strategic and regional menace to a still-objectionable but now-harmless relic of Communist empire. Harmless, that is, except to its citizens. They are offered social guarantees and the mixed satisfactions of defying the United States but are denied the dignity of individual rights and political choice. In this view Fidel Castro represents a low-grade political fever that, if only by his aging (he's 69), will someday pass.

But this may be wrong. Bernard Aronson, George Bush's Latin hand, is one who warns of the inflammatory potential of a unique mix, including (1) repressive Communist rule in Cuba, (2) the proximity and exposure of a Cuba lying just 90 miles off the American shore and (3) the presence of a sizable, concerned and resourceful exile constituency in Florida.

Rendering this mix even more volatile is the classic American ambivalence just demonstrated anew by the Clinton administration. Like its predecessors, it is pulled one way by diplomatic prudence and another way by the exiles' idealistic appeal and political weight and by Castro's radioactive glow in American politics — he fires people up. Washington had tried but failed to head off both the exiles' provocative penetrations and the Havana regime's bloody reprisal. Last month's drama provided a textbook case of how events flout policy control.

The administration's immediate response was reflexive. To pre-empt Congress, it notched up American pressures on the regime; unassuaged, a raging Congress demanded more. More quietly, the administration moved to keep a handful of exiles from continuing their bold and, in this instance, wildly and troublingly successful bid to commandeer the nation's foreign policy.

You can argue that this was what President Clinton had to do, and could do, in the circumstances. But it in no way meets the abiding requirement to realize how events might again spin out of control, this time in a much more severe way.

A consensus disaster scenario opens with Havana Cubans rising up and Miami Cubans coming to their aid — in hours by sea, in minutes by air. The scenario continues with the American government . . . But how could Cubans of any stripe be convinced that the U.S. government, which repeatedly tried to murder Castro and has steadily opposed his rule, had no hand in whatever was by then unfolding? How could Americans?

It was a combination of popular desperation and official calculation in Cuba and the exiles' initiative in Florida that produced the explosive flight/rescue of 125,000 Cubans from Mariel in 1980. A repeat of that massive, disruptive exodus is the specter haunting the election-bound Clinton administration today. The United States could invade Haiti to block a similar threat. It can't conceivably invade Cuba.

Yet the embargo tighteners preach their message of pressure and deprivation without thought of how to handle the political crisis, let alone the human pain, their strategy would aggravate. Nor, it must be added, are contrary-minded embargo looseners spelling out very well just how their policy would better the Cuban people's plight, rather than simply bail out Fidel Castro.

It could happen that Cuba and the United States will slouch into a true violent disaster. I don't see Washington asking for it. Castro is hard to figure. Until just the other day he was playing the moderate, hustling up international investment. Suddenly he turned bully, savaging a feeble human rights collective and firing at exile flights he had previously cursed but abided. So much for investment any time soon.

This seems a poor moment for the halting and broken dialogue that constitutes the official American-Cuban relationship. No matter, the United States should have its own agenda. A provisional list would include a unilateral humanitarian lifting of the embargo on food and medical supplies. As soon as possible, Miami-Havana telephone calls and family visits should be resumed, even if Castro skims off dollars. Legal emigration procedures must be kept intact. There must be encouragement of the faint stirrings of political pluralism on the island. Policy planners must think out the disaster scenarios. Policy enforcers must address the Florida freelancers. This is a foundation for peaceful change, over time.



Time for the Hot Mouths to Cool It

Diane Rehm says talk-show hosts should be fair and factual rather than descend to loud, angry rhetoric

DURING A panel discussion on politics and the media at Brown University last year, a woman in the audience stood up to tell me why talk-show host Rush Limbaugh was such an important source of information for her. "Just recently," she said, "he read an article from the New York Times on the air and dissected it to demonstrate to his listeners that it was filled with liberal bias." I responded by saying that although I respected her right to choose to listen to Limbaugh, I was disappointed that she had not bothered to read the Times article and interpret it for herself.

This is the infectious world of talk radio, to which many people now turn not only for the bulk of their information but for direction as well. Interpretation is then passed on as though it were fact.

As we move into the 1996 presidential election, we talk-show hosts have a special responsibility: to stimulate a balanced discussion of substantive issues. It sounds simple, but it is not.

In contrast to reporters or analysts whose words were once passed through a gauntlet of editors and fact-checkers, an increasing number of hosts attract listeners by touting their own views on "hot-button" issues — government, discrimination, gun control, affirmative action, conspiracies of the left or right, and so on — and ridiculing those who disagree with them.

Many talk-show hosts today are hired not on the basis of proven broadcast skills or experience but because of name recognition and the ability to be provocative. Oliver North was convicted as a felon for his role in the Iran-contra scandal before the charges against him were dismissed on a technicality. After his failed race for the US Senate, North landed a spot on a talk-radio station in Washington and was promptly syndicated around the country. G. Gordon Liddy of Watergate fame is another who got his microphone mainly because he had a big name and was willing to say incendiary things.

Others who have recently entered the talk-show field with instant name recognition include three former governors: Mario Cuomo of New York, now doing a weekly Saturday morning stint after losing his job in the Republican election sweep of 1994; Douglas Wilder of Virginia, who tried his hand at both radio and television (his talk show has recently been dropped); and Jerry Brown of California. As former politicians, these people are comfortable espousing their views in public forums. Listeners seem equally pleased to have direct access to people whose names have been on the front pages of national newspapers.

In today's talk radio, it is not just the hosts who are changing. During the 16 years I have been on radio in the nation's capital, listeners to talk radio have become more sophisticated, more prepared to use the medium for their own purposes. Instead of asking questions, many callers make statements. Rather than seek information, they challenge experts.

As in any public endeavor, there are abuses of privilege. In one instance, the number-two executive at radio station WRC in Washington, Warren Wright, called during Oliver North's interview with House Speaker Newt Gingrich on that same station. Identifying himself as "Bill from Fairfax," as arranged in advance, Wright asked the speaker about legislation that would lift restrictions on radio station ownership. Jack Roberts, North's producer, and the station's acting program director, called the incident "a lapse in judgment" on his part. Roberts went on to say, "Do I like doing this? No. Should I have stopped it when I realized or suspected it was his voice? Probably." North said he was not aware of the planted question. He added, "That's life."



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID McMULLANS

That is, indeed, life on talk radio. Many of us speak with pride about providing free access to the airwaves for all who want to comment on every aspect of our lives together. But all of us worry, or should worry, that increasingly talk radio is becoming a mechanism through which the public's worst suspicions are confirmed daily.

Some talk-show hosts actively encourage the spreading of unconfirmed rumors, such as those surrounding the suicide of White House lawyer Vincent Foster.

Talk radio is a volatile medium. Immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing, the talk shows were filled with the rage of listeners and hosts around the country who believed the blast had been carried out by foreign nationals. That belief fed into renewed calls for refusing entry to most foreigners. Then came the news that the bombing was more likely the work of Americans. Attention then shifted toward the astounding growth of militias in this country and of groups vocal in expressing a hatred toward the federal government primarily rooted in their opposition to gun control and taxes.

UNTIL his program was taken off the air after the Oklahoma City bombing, Mark Koernke, who broadcast as "Mark of Michigan," was delivering his message of hatred nightly over Worldwide Christian Radio (WWCR), a shortwave station in Nashville. At one point, Koernke suggested that the government itself might be responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing. According to the New York Times, other hosts on WWCR said that the government "is exploiting a grievous situation to put across their agenda of establishing a police state."

Congressional investigations into the raid on the Branch Davidian compound at Waco, Texas, and the shooting of white supremacist Randy Weaver's wife by a federal sharpshooter in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, exposed the anger that many in this country feel toward certain federal agencies. Senate and House committees found that errors in judgment and communication by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and members of the FBI led to disastrous results in both cases. However, in neither case could they find what talk-show listeners had heard described for months: a conspiracy on the part of the federal government.

Up until now, talk radio has been driven by those most interested in attracting a large number of listeners to sell advertising for corporate sponsors. The loudest, most provocative voices are those that translate into higher ratings and, therefore, more dollars, and so the virus continues to spread.

There are, however, indications that the public may be growing weary of the rhetorical excesses and that there may be a correction, perhaps even a reduction, in the listening audience. But until the public speaks out more forcefully against the "hot mouths" of talk radio, the forces that drive the industry will continue to provoke loud, angry rhetoric instead of offering fair and factual presentations of the complex issues inherent in any democracy.

Talk-show hosts know from recent experience that many people depend on us for their information about the candidates and their platforms — more on us than on their newspapers, magazines or evening newscasts. We fulfill their trust when we pose informed questions about the people competing for the presidency; we betray their trust when we rant and rail against "their" candidates and support only "ours." We fail totally if we succumb to political passion and talk radio becomes the mouthpiece for fashionable ideology of any stripe and in the process, banishes the wide range of political opinions and people that should be before the American public at this crucial time.

Diane Rehm hosts her own talk show, now nationally syndicated, on WAMU-FM.

Pat's 'Shoot From the Lip' Style Proves Profitable

COMMENT
Ellen Goodman

THE TIME is midweek between Pat Buchanan's victory in New Hampshire and his second and third place finishes in the Dakotas and Arizona.

The network is CNN.

The program is Crossfire, where Buchanan plies his trade as a journalist between gigs as a presidential candidate.

On the left, as the Crossfire lingo goes, is Geraldine Ferraro, politician just turned pundit. On the right is Robert Novak in a seat often occupied by John Sununu, another pol turned pundit. In the middle is Kenneth Adelman, a former Reagan official now turned syndicated columnist.

Their subject is Pat Buchanan, pundit turned politician turned pundit turned politician. Are you dizzy yet? Ken Adelman is saying that one of the reasons Pat is a good candidate for president of the United States is that "he's very good at the kind of Crossfire shows . . ."

What's wrong with this picture? On television, the punditocracy has begun to look like the last scene from Orwell's Animal Farm. You can't tell the journalists from the politicians, the watchdogs from the running dogs. It's not that they are in bed with each other, it's that they have become one and the same.

Out of this new reality has come Patrick Buchanan, would-be president. His candidacy is the petri-dish conception, the embryo created from the sperm of sound-bite politics and the egg of food-fight journalism.

Remember how often a politician is referred to as a "media creation"? Whatever happens in the next weeks, Pugnacious Pat has shown us the genuine article: The Crossfire Candidate.

"People mock The McLaughlin Group and Crossfire," he says, "but the training I got there and on the radio, it is extraordinary for a candidate. Extraordinary! . . . You are able to articulate your views clearly, sharply and briefly. You learn to limit the wonk stuff and try to get some humor and wit into it."

No doubt, Pat started early. While Bill Clinton was trying to stop his stepfather from slugging his mother, the Buchanan boys were punished by their father "when we failed to hit a punching bag 400 times a day." You don't need a shrink to figure out why one grew up in search of common ground and the other preferred scorched earth.



Buchanan: media pundit who 'never fears to oversimplify'

But Buchanan came of age and name-recognition in an era when television turned journalism into a contact sport. Now we have to ask what it means to be "trained" for presidential politics by Crossfire or Capital Gang or McLaughlin.

It means, of course, learning to limit "the wonk stuff" in politics, the details, the facts. It means becoming a champ at what James Fallows calls in his new book "competitive glibness."

It means purposeful, even artificial polarization, the art of dueling certainties.

As Fallows writes in Breaking The News: How The Media Undermine American Democracy: "In real life people disagree but consider the possibility of consensus. In polarized talk-show life, they score points off one another and don't even pretend that there's a possibility one combatant might change his mind."

Time magazine's Margaret Carlson once confessed about her talk-show experience, "the less you know, the better off you are." What happens when the Crossfire Candidate enters a political arena already downsized into seven-second issues?

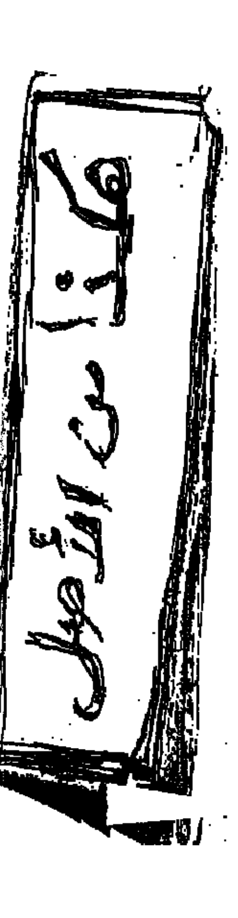
You get Pat Buchanan posing at the OK Corral in Arizona. You get one-liner public policy and political infotainment. You get an impression left on politics like a fist mark on the face.

It's said that what the voters like about Buchanan is that "he says what he thinks" and "you know where he stands." Indeed there is nothing wishy-washy about his stand against all abortions, against immigration, against homosexuality, his rejection of evolution, or his belief that "women are simply not endowed by nature with the same measures of single-minded ambition and the will to succeed in the fiercely competitive world of Western capitalism." As his former co-host Michael Kinsley once said, Buchanan "never fears to oversimplify."

But the question left by this offspring of food-fight journalism and sound-bite politics is whether "saying what you think" has now become synonymous with extremism. With simplicity at all costs. Is that what he and we have learned from the journo-politics of the talk show culture that scorches the middle ground and falsely divides ambivalence into two absolutes?

Years ago, when Buchanan was applying to journalism school, a teacher was asked to list the student's handicaps. The Jesuit wrote: "Irascibility." Handicap? These days, it seems more and more like a job qualification.

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The Cairo Duet

Penelope Lively

I KNOW MANY SONGS, BUT I CANNOT SING
By Brian Kiteley
Simon & Schuster. 190pp. $20

THE ANGLOPHONE novelists who have tried to give fictional expression to the baffling complexities of Egyptian cities are a select few: P.H. Newby, D.J. Enright, Olivia Manning, a handful of others — Lawrence Durrell, above all. A disparate set of writers — but when you come to reflect upon the books concerned, you realize that they all feature the same sense of anarchy, the same suggestion of a place that seems in a way surreal. "Everything that can happen does happen in Egypt," says the authorial voice in Brian Kiteley's contribution to the sequence of fiction fascinated by that baffling country. But the stress in these novels is on the maverick nature of happenings — the unexpected, the provocative, the way in which the labyrinthine city streets and their teeming inhabitants constantly tease and surprise. Nothing is what you thought it was; people disappear and reappear where least anticipated. The climate is operatic.

The long shadow over Kiteley's novel is that of Durrell. By Durrell out of Iris Murdoch, the reader feels throughout the course of the two main characters' nightlong wanderings around Cairo. There are flight and pursuit, oblique and elusive conversational exchanges, sexual skirmishes. And all the while the city itself — the city of today, the kaleidoscopic place in which ancient and modern are juxtaposed in a chaotic, traffic-infested human midden — serves as the third participant, manipulating and dictating.

Ib is an American who has been teaching at the American University in Cairo. He has just returned from the States, where he has attended the funeral of his stepfather. Jet-lagged, he finds himself swept up at once in Cairo's street life on an evening of Ramadan — the religious festival during which for a month Muslims must fast all day, eating only after sunset and before sunrise, a strange period when night becomes day and people are disoriented and with heightened sensibilities. He falls in with a stranger, Gamal. They talk. Later, elsewhere, Gamal reappears. Coincidence or not? Their relationship becomes a pursuit and finally a companionship in which the pair roam the city and its environs until the dawn — falling in with Gamal's wife, relatives and friends in mystifying, shifting patterns of association.

It is never clear who Gamal is. At one point he may be a government spy. He says he is Armenian, but he can speak perfect American English. Both he and others they come across have a disconcerting degree of knowledge about Ib's personal circumstances. These random meetings are inconclusive and inconsequential, contributing to the hallucinatory effect of this brief novel. This effect is presumably intentional, but it must be said that it also undermines the reader's patience. If nothing adds up, you begin to feel, then what is the destination of this voyage through the night? Real life is indeed random, but the satisfaction of fiction usually comes from the imposition of some sort of meaning and significance upon apparent disorder. That is not to be found here, and the fragmented stories told by one character to another seem equally to be quite arbitrarily imposed.



DETAIL FROM AN ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY RUSSO

That being said, the strength of the book is in its evocation of the atmosphere of Cairo. Here, the shadow of Durrell lifts. There is none of the ornate and tortuous prose that can be for readers of The Alexandria Quartet a pain or a pleasure according to taste. Brian Kiteley writes with admirable concision and accuracy, conjuring up in a few words the seminal flavors of Cairo life. The clothes strung out above the narrow streets to dry by night, which then drip onto passersby and the customers of sidewalk coffee-houses. Men in lace caps ironing at high tables in an open shop doorway. The smells — animal dung, rotten fruit, coffee, kerosene.

There are odd, vivid set-piece scenes — the rescue of a man floating down the Nile on a raft of vegetation, the crowd in a prayer tent awaiting the cannon from the Citadel that announces the end of the day's fast. The evasive nature of the dramatis personae is accentuated by the inconstancy of language — everyone flits from English to Arabic to French or German. And this, of course, is nicely accurate — Cairo has ever been the ultimate polyglot city, as much a fusion of cultures as it is a kaleidoscope of periods. These are the areas in which the novel succeeds — as an evocation of a place and its people. As a piece of fiction it is emotive, but it also leaves the reader frustrated as it evaporates into unexplained inconsequence as dawn breaks over the desert on the final pages.

Indivisibly Divided

Hettie Jones

THE COLOR OF WATER
A Black Man's Tribute To His White Mother
By James McBride
Riverhead Books. 256pp. $21.95

DIVIDED TO THE VEIN
A Journey Into Race and Family
By Scott Minerbrook
Harcourt Brace. 261pp. $24

WELCOME to the great American paradox: our widely publicized race hatred, backed up by census figures that show us falling in love. Between 1960 and 1990, interracial marriages increased by 547 percent. Thousands of children of color now claim this legacy. The books here are by young black men in search of their white histories.

James McBride had the better deal — a close family in the sustaining hands of a mother whose story, told in her own voice, alternates with McBride's in his book. In the '40s, Rachel Shilsky fled a harsh, lonely, orthodox Jewish childhood in Suffolk, Virginia, to relatives in New York. There she became a Christian and established a church (still in operation in Brooklyn) with her first husband. After his death she married again, a black man like the first, a good man lovingly and skillfully portrayed, who took her on with eight children and added four more. Disowned by her family, Rachel kept her past and her color to herself, admitting only to being "light-skinned." With wit and determination, on little money she saw all 12 of her children through college, but most important, she took a realistic view of race; her children — all different shades, all best friends, according to McBride — were raised to see themselves as black and proud to be that. Yet, when as a child McBride asked the color of God, he was told that God was neither black nor white but "the color of water."

He explores his early confusion about race but mentions never feeling deprived or unhappy, and it's clear that love and respect for his mother led him to Rachel's history. McBride has worked as a reporter and is now a saxophonist and composer, and his book is as lively as a novel, a well-written, thoughtful contribution to the literature on race.

Scott Minerbrook is a national correspondent for U.S. News & World Report. His revelations in Divided To The Vein, unlike McBride's, are painful, and his acceptance of his position far more ambivalent — his title is taken from a poem by Derek Walcott that begins, "I who am poisoned with the blood of both." LaVerne Smith and

He lay down his own burden of blame: 'We were all guilty and all innocent in my family'

Alan Minerbrook married in Chicago in 1949; asked by her mother-in-law what race her children would be, the white La Verne — born Audilea in Caruthersville, Montana — said, "I guess we'll have to let [them] decide for themselves." Wrong answer, Scott Minerbrook admits, but the only one she understood. His grandmother considered her son's wife white trash. Cast off by her own people, LaVerne was kept an outsider by her husband's.

Nevertheless the marriage continued; both LaVerne and her husband Alan were ambitious and successful — he a super-salesman, she a clothing designer — and they eventually had four children and moved to a large house in Norwalk, Connecticut. It is at this point that Divided To The Vein becomes a sad tale of family violence and racial name-calling, of troubled children in the midst of suburban plenty alienated from their parents as well as each other. Scott Minerbrook writes well of coping with his conflicts, his loneliness. He undertook to find his white grandparents to heal himself, and although he never was able to change their minds about their daughter's decision, he did lay down his own burden of blame, and, as he tells us, realized that "We were all guilty and all innocent in my family."

Both these authors were born before the boom in interracial marriages and increased public acknowledgment (if not acceptance) of "rainbow babies" as a presence in American life. Reading their stories one is struck by how dependent the success of such a life is on any number of variables. High on the list is extended family and community. After her second husband's death, Rachel was able to send the adolescent, troublesome McBride to his stepfather's people for safekeeping. Minerbrook missed that sustenance just when he needed it most. As in years past, it seems that the better way to grow up interracial is with ties to black people, long accustomed to providing brown and beige babies with survival lessons, even those, like Scott Minerbrook, who say they're "too light to be black."

That the Jews and Anglos involved were nowhere in sight is another page from the past, one that — racist as we are — is probably being duplicated somewhere right now. But with all this marrying going on, it can be reasonably assumed that in at least one instance the whole village, white and black, is actually raising the child, in whose face is their own American history, a living presence not a hidden wound. That would be a good book too, wouldn't it?

A Hymn for the Ordinary

Trey Graham

THE LAW OF ENCLOSURES
By Dale Peck Farrar
Straus Giroux. 306pp. $23

WITH HIS first novel, 1993's Martin And John, Dale Peck drew critical hosannas for his uncannily authoritative grasp of style, which would have done credit to any veteran and was especially impressive given his youth (he was then and is still under 30). The book put some readers off, though, with its self-consciously complex stories-within-a-story structure. Peck's newest effort, The Law Of Enclosures, is if anything more pretentious in its concept, and if possible more virtuosic in its execution.

It is chiefly the story of Beatrice and Henry, whose relationship it tracks over half a century. They meet young, fall in love and marry too early, and learn to hate each other for the same reasons as millions of other couples: the small, creeping irritations of everyday life, and their own inability to articulate their feelings. They remain married, though, bound inexplicably together, and when they sense death approaching they realize how much time has been wasted.

Their tale is either universally resonant or commonplace to the point of banality, depending upon your perspective, but Peck tells it in a voice full of aching, poetic yearning, managing somehow to be at once deeply romantic and scathingly cynical. At the last, he succeeds in transforming Henry, initially a sour and thoroughly unsympathetic character, into a tragic hero of classical proportions. Beatrice, always wiser and more graceful, is not just transformed but transfigured, beautified. The conclusion of their story is inevitable, surprisingly sudden, and shattering.

The rhythm of Peck's prose is always calculated (you can hear him counting out the syllables), but the effect is undeniably seductive, like an incantation. "The answer was simple: four rows back, three columns over, two weeks late for class, sat one boy who hadn't been there before, and, at the sight of him, Beatrice felt a spot of nothingness inside herself." Four, three, two, one, nothing: The gentle, relentless pulse of the sentence carries as much power as the moment it describes.

Many of this author's word-pictures owe their impact to bold inventiveness. A determined woman's scar is "a raised red river" that "will never travel further than the length of its eighteen inches, and over the years it will recede into her skin, as if embarrassed to testify that in her, as in everyone else, there once existed the possibility of weakness."

A central section comprises several linked essays on family under the title "Lamentations." This is where the novel's conceit becomes too much to bear. Ostensibly, these beautifully written but immensely self-indulgent rhapsodies are linked to the main story by "a fictional narrator, Dale Peck," whose work they are. He supposedly has encountered an ailing Beatrice in a hospital where he's looking for information about his mother's death. He means to incorporate whatever he finds into a book about his family. But it's as though someone took a handful of Updike's essays from the New York Review and plunked them down in the center of Rabbit At Rest.

So as not to discount these musings entirely, it should be said that they are, like most of Peck's writing, uncommonly perceptive, obviously the work of an agile mind in service to an unquiet soul. And they're genuinely gorgeous. It's just that they seem out of place in the middle of this rather unassuming love story.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 10 1996

'No one can calculate the cost of change'

The Russian prime minister talks to **Françoise Lazare** and **Sophie Shihab**

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin last week held your cabinet responsible for everything that had gone wrong in Russia and even threatened a reshuffle. Was this merely an electoral ploy or are you really likely to step down before June's presidential elections?

I'm prepared to accept any criticism. Governments have to take overall responsibility, and I'm not trying to pass the buck. But it's impossible to turn a country like Russia into a market economy without a fall in living standards. It remains to be seen how great a fall is acceptable. For the moment no one can calculate the cost of the change.

But I don't know if anyone else could have succeeded, as we did, in implementing that kind of change without a bloodbath or major upheaval. Further reforms will be needed to increase jobs and training, to get the economy going, and to create conditions where living standards can begin to increase.

Last year was much better than previous years. We were one of the few countries to meet a whole series of International Monetary Fund requirements. Inflation has been brought down from 18 per cent a month in January 1995 to about 3 per cent, and the budget deficit to 3 per cent of GDP. Output fell by only 3 per cent in 1995, and some sectors even grew.

But you can't explain to people that their standard of living is going to fall; you have to take steps to ensure it doesn't. Recently it has fallen more slowly and, with lower inflation, pay disparities have stopped increasing.

Salaries and pensions are still too low, and they're not paid on time. Taxes aren't coming in because the fiscal system is very complex. Domestic investment hasn't really got going, nor has foreign investment.

But if businesses aren't investing or paying salaries on time, where is the money going?

One can't say that businesses aren't investing, or that they're leaving all their money in foreign banks. The big problem is intercompany arrears. Barter is widespread and, with no money in circulation, companies often don't have the cash to pay salaries and taxes.

The Communist party leader, Gennady Zyuganov, says IMF money may be financing the war in Chechenia or vanishing into civil servants' pockets.

Those who level charges like that are simply betraying their own incompetence. Zyuganov is notorious for not knowing much about economics. Everything is being monitored by IMF teams on the ground in Russia. We've also accepted monthly checks on the $4 billion of the new loan we are due to receive in the first year. As for Chechenia, it accounts for an infinitesimal proportion of the budget.

Yeltsin has said that $4 billion, including $1 billion of foreign credit, should go towards the reconstruction of Chechenia. Where are you going to find the money?

That's not quite right. First, the $1 billion of foreign credit is an upper limit, and it could be less. And the total sum includes ordinary spending that the budget anyway provides for Chechenia. In the case of Tatarstan, the amount is four times greater. And only a small proportion [of the $4 billion] will go towards reconstruction. This year we've hardly earmarked anything for that yet — why rebuild if fighting is still going on?

What are your economic priorities for the coming months?

Our priorities are social priorities. Of course social problems impinge on the campaign, but they're also fundamental. President Yeltsin will supervise social policy. We can't go on moving forward unless salaries, particularly public-sector salaries, are paid. I can confirm that it will all be done strictly within the framework of the 1996 budget.

Money for extra social spending will be provided by increased revenues and by foreign credits from the IMF, the World Bank and other organisations. I'm not in favour of such loans — they're no panacea. They're not donations, and have to be paid back with interest. Our income will be generated mostly by improved output, in other words by companies' ability to pay and resulting tax revenues.

Can you see a third way between a return to traditional communism and the road to capitalism?

A way to where? We don't want to come up with a new solution — our country has already tried out enough systems. We're moving towards a system of normal and civilised market relations. We want a regime regulated by the rule of law, where everyone feels protected at work and in their everyday lives.

For 70 years we chased a mirage of communism bequeathed by Marx and Engels. Our task is to take what has been tried out elsewhere and adapt it to Russia. We can't just copy the French, German, American or Japanese system — it wouldn't work here. Russia has its own character.

(February 28)

Viktor Chernomyrdin: 'We chased a mirage of communism'

UN wearies of dispute over Western Sahara

Catherine Simon in Laayoune

THE notion that all wars are bad may not be shared by the inhabitants of Laayoune in Western Sahara. This former Spanish garrison town has benefited enormously from the conflict that has been smouldering between King Hassan and the separatists of the Polisario Front since 1976, when Morocco occupied the territory as the Spanish colonialists abandoned it.

Morocco has since spared no expense to turn this sleepy *douar* into a spruce Saharan capital complete with drinking water, electricity, housing, asphalt roads, hospitals, shops and markets. Thanks to the free-zone status of the region, most staples cost less in Laayoune than elsewhere in Morocco.

A desalination plant near the town already provides 80 litres of drinking water per second and covers most of the local population's needs. Within two years it is expected to supply the whole region.

Morocco's cripplingly expensive strategy was bound to bear fruit. In the past 15 years, the population of Laayoune has swollen from about 80,000 to more than 170,000. In a region where political power is, above all, measured in demographic terms, these figures show how persistently Morocco has striven to keep Western Sahara within the orbit of its "motherland".

A stone's throw from large modern villas stand huge grey-white tents sporting the occasional satellite dish, home to the Sahrawi population that has rallied to the royal flag. Their reward for doing so is free food and, soon, housing (5,000 homes are being built for them).

They are due to vote in the self-determination referendum, which has been regularly postponed over the past four years: Rabat says they have already decided for integration with Morocco and against independence: if the referendum does take place, it can only be "confirmative".

The difficult process of identifying potential voters seems to have run out of steam. UN supervisors say it was jeopardised in December when the Polisario Front rejected 100,000 applications that had come "from people living outside the territory, in southern Morocco" and expressed "major reservations" about "certain tribal groups in the territory".

Last month, UN representatives in Western Sahara persuaded the Security Council to extend their mandate until May 31. If no "tangible progress" is made, it will then consider the possibility of a "gradual withdrawal" of UN personnel.

The UN representative, Erik Jensen, is not fazed by the prospect: "Between 1993 and 1995, we managed to carry out what was considered only three years ago to be an impossible task: the implementation of an identification process."

Of the 234,000 people who applied, more than 62,000 were interviewed — quite an achievement considering the Kafkaesque conditions imposed on the UN by the two parties to the conflict.

The Moroccan interior minister, Driss Basri, says: "We'd prefer the referendum to take place, but not at any price." The Polisario Front is equally determined. Its spokesman in France, Mohamed Fadel Ismail, says: "Either the UN secretary general assumes his responsibilities and persuades Morocco to take part in talks, or it will be the end of the settlement process, with the risk of renewed hostilities." He says that if the process fails it will be mainly the fault of the UN, which he accuses of acting on Moroccan orders.

The militarily weak Polisario Front owes its survival to active support from Algeria and, to a lesser extent, Libya. The Sahrawi population in the "liberated zone" gets most of its food from the World Food Programme; the rest comes from Algeria. Although it has greatly reduced its arms and munitions aid (there has been an unofficial ceasefire since 1991), Algeria is the Polisario Front's only haven, providing military training and fuel.

Algiers will probably have to say goodbye to its long-cherished hope of securing a corridor to the Atlantic via Western Sahara. But it remains determined to ensure that the conflict remains a thorn in the flesh of Morocco, which it suspects of wishing to impose its hegemony over all the Maghreb countries.

(February 29)

Good money thrown after bad Russia

EDITORIAL

THE West most definitely has a problem with Russia. Just as they used to in the good old days, leading Western capitals support whoever happens to be the boss of the Kremlin — in this case, Boris Yeltsin. Last week, four months away from the imponderables of Russia's presidential election, the IMF granted Moscow an exceptionally large loan of $10 billion. Once again, the West is playing a dangerous game. There was no urgency or need for such a spectacular gesture.

The head of the IMF, Michel Camdessus, explained that the loan was a way of encouraging Russia to pursue its reforms, and should in no way be seen as implicit backing for Yeltsin's candidacy. The argument is fallacious. In the middle of an election campaign, the money will enable Yeltsin, among other things, to pay the salary arrears owed to some government employees.

Leading stakeholders in the IMF, such as Bill Clinton, Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac, make no secret of the fact that they think this is the best way of helping Yeltsin beat Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist presidential candidate. In Moscow last week Kohl praised the president's "utter reliability".

Yeltsin is a brutal and fickle man who has a very low popularity rating in his own country, and who has already reneged on many of his promises to Western countries. It is true that his reforms have helped stabilise the economic situation. But, as his opponents point out, the considerable aid channelled to Moscow in the past three years has also helped finance the war in Chechenia. What is more, much of it has been siphoned off by mafia groups or stashed away in Swiss bank accounts.

Just as the IMF was announcing its loan, Yeltsin once again treated the West in cavalier fashion: on February 22 he promised Camdessus he would maintain a policy of austerity and reform; the next day he threatened to sack his prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, if he persisted in pursuing that very same policy.

So how can Yeltsin's fresh promises be taken seriously? Camdessus says that he has guarantees, and that the IMF can always suspend its aid — paid out on a month-by-month basis — if Russia does not keep its promises. The recent past suggests, however, that such a hasty announcement was inopportune to say the least.

A provisional and more modest financial package would surely have been preferable to this mega-loan. It would have enabled the Russians to choose their president without worrying about what the West thought.

(February 25/26)

Allen's key to Mighty Aphrodite

Pascal Mérigeau reviews Woody Allen's new film. Below, the actor and director talks to **Jean Michel Frodon**

THE extent of the differences that exist between Lenny and Amanda Weintrib, a well-off New York couple, can be gauged when they set about choosing a name for the boy they are adopting: Amanda (Helena Bonham Carter) only half-listens to her husband (Woody Allen) as he suggests that the lad should be called Groucho, Django or Sugar Ray — or perhaps even Harpo, Cole, Shane, Earl the Pearl or Thelonius.

In the end they plump for plain Max, as Amanda had suggested — a name whose very ordinariness suits the boy well: he turns out to be extraordinarily gifted, as Lenny and Amanda discover with each new day. In this they are like all parents, the difference being that most people are not, like them, able to turn to a Greek chorus for advice.

As if he did not already have enough ingredients with a New York couple, an adorable little boy and a Greek chorus, Allen also throws in a young prostitute who acts in porn movies, and a boxer who proudly announces he has "fought 16 bouts and won all of them except 12".

These and a few minor characters are whipped up into a vaudeville-like confection. Allen adds occasional dashes of autobiography, which the spectator can either enjoy trying to decode or simply take as twists in the plot.



ILLUSTRATION: MARC TARASKOFF

He juggles with commonplaces and paradoxes, debunks the convention and cliché of a world he knows well, and allows the narrative to flow freely — except that it is constantly being commented on, analysed or egged on by the Greek chorus. In other words, Mighty Aphrodite is vintage Woody Allen.

Allen is clearly delighted to be back in front of the camera, playing sports reporter Lenny, who is determined to track down the real mother of the little boy whose intelligence so fascinates him. That is how he meets Linda, whose uninhibited lifestyle, lack of culture and poor judgment come as a surprise to him.

When she starts acting as though he were one of her clients and he retreats nervously to the other end of the couch, Woody the actor offers Allen the director — unless the reverse is true — a great moment of pure comedy.

And when Lenny decides to find an ideal husband for the mother of his boy, a man she deserves because of her sincerity and lovingness, he takes on the role of go-between, deciding on the precise circumstances of Linda's encounter with Kevin (the boxer), polishing their first exchange of dialogue, and trying to put himself in their respective shoes.

Lenny plays at being a film director so he can stop being one of the actors in Linda's life. But the scenario he works out is thwarted by Allen's script, for it is Allen who is really running the show.

As so often, he subverts the elements of the romantic comedy he has himself put in place (the fact that Linda and Lenny have nothing in common would, under normal Hollywood rules, ensure they came together at the end of the film).

Allen's ability to do this derives from his virtuoso control of dramatic effect and narrative technique, but also from his independence as a film-maker, whose working methods ensure ideal production conditions.

His ambition in Mighty Aphrodite is to offer a piece of light-handed, inventive entertainment pepped up by the occasional discreet but deadly aside (such as his reference to the "hell" of fatherhood).

Mighty Aphrodite is a huge laugh for everyone — for Allen and his actors, in particular the irresistible Mira Sorvino as Linda, but also and above all for the audience.

(February 15)

Correction course for comedy acting

WHEN you begin a new script, do you know in advance how the narrative is going to work out?

Yes, always. If you just have a good idea but don't develop it, you end up with a 20-page script, and you're forced to spin it out artificially.

Writing is more fun than prowling round the room asking yourself: "What story am I telling? Where is it all going to lead?" But it's something you have to do. I need to know where I'm going more than how I'm going to get there.

Are you aware of the broader themes you deal with in your films, irrespective of the story line?

No. I discover them when the shooting stage is over. Only then do I realise that this or that underlying idea has taken shape, and that I need to go on working on it during the rest of production.

The basic idea in Mighty Aphrodite is that anyone who adopts a child is bound one day to wonder who its real parents are. On the whole people don't really want to know, but it's something they think about.

I thought it would be funny to show someone getting obsessed with the problem and becoming more and more appalled by what he discovered. The story was getting to look like a Greek tragedy, hence the idea of using a chorus to turn it into a more universal statement about feelings, which haven't changed since Euripides's time.

At one point in the film, directing is compared to an awkward attempt at divine intervention.

Lenny, the character I play, interferes with the life of Linda, the real mother of the child. He behaves a bit like a film director, changing the way she dresses and talks and arranges her apartment, thinking up a partner for her and trying to manipulate her life.

It's actually debatable whether he's doing her a favour or not. She's a prostitute, but isn't unhappy about it. She earns good money and spends her time dreaming of becoming an actress. Lenny forces her to assume the conformist persona of a middle-class woman. I think he's right to do so, because in my view it must be horrible to be a prostitute. But I quite accept that someone might come and say to me: who are you to decide on the life she should lead?

You interfere with her life doubly, as a character and as a director. The first time it's a failure, the second a success.

The second time it's Fate that interferes, a *deus ex machina*, in other words God.

... who is none other than yourself, scriptwriter and director of the film.

Quite right. I was the person who decided it was going to be that way when I wrote the script. But I'm incapable of having a similar influence on my own life — as everyone knows.

Mighty Aphrodite is more of a "pure" comedy than your preceding films.

I'm delighted when people laugh. I try to make them laugh, but also to go further than that, to make them think. Every time a new movie of mine comes out, American critics say I should stick to being funny and not try to be thought-provoking. But when I made Manhattan Murder Mystery, the American papers said: it's not enough to be funny. That really amused me.

You turn out films in very quick succession. Do you see any link between them?

Not as far as I'm aware. It's a question of chance. The choice of a subject may be guided by budget considerations. I sometimes get ideas that would cost $30 million to make [an average Hollywood budget, but much more than Allen's films cost], but I don't waste time turning them into scripts. I wouldn't be able to come up with that kind of money, and anyway I wouldn't want to. Budgets that size mean there's far too much financial pressure.

How did you choose the actors for Mighty Aphrodite?

I'd seen Helena Bonham Carter in A Room With A View and Howards End. I thought her elegance would contrast well with the character I play and with the real mother of the child. The part had been written for an American, but it's better to have a good English actress than the wrong person.

When it came to choosing the actress to play the part of Linda the prostitute, I relied on experience. Both Broadway Danny Rose and Bullets Over Broadway featured a similar kind of dumb blonde. In each case the actress I chose — Mia Farrow and Jennifer Tilly — was a very bright woman. Mira Sorvino, too, is very clever and educated, and I knew she would illuminate the character from within. She invented a voice for Linda, which I discovered on the first day of shooting, just as I discovered Helena Bonham Carter's American accent.

Do you also direct the actors' voices?

No. Generally speaking I don't direct, I correct. But, as it turned out, there was nothing to correct. Once I've chosen good actors who are right for their parts, I've done most of the work. They know what they're supposed to do. On set, they never ask me what I want. They understand and they act.

Does each film require a specific shooting technique?

In my case yes. Some film-makers are great stylists, people like Leni Riefenstahl or Martin Scorsese. Whatever the story, they leave their stamp on the images. Other directors, including myself (perhaps because I was originally a writer), just bring the script to life on the screen.

Husband And Wives was shot in a completely different way from Bullets Over Broadway. The only thing that doesn't change from movie to movie is the use of long takes. I'm more at ease when I can shoot a whole scene in one take. And so are the actors.

(February 15)

Renaissance manner

Philippe Dagen

GIORGIO VASARI
by Roland Le Mollé
Grasset 478pp FF159

THIS is a biography of a biographer, surely a tempting yet perilous exercise for its author Roland Le Mollé. Vasari (1511-74) is celebrated for his Lives Of The Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters and Sculptors — among whom he made sure to include himself.

Although he may not have invented artistic biography, Vasari remains the writer who raised the genre to its highest level. But his paintings, frescoes and architectural work have suffered from his fame as a chronicler.

Just as Vasari himself did not restrict himself to recounting the lives of painters and listing their paintings, Le Mollé does not just piece together the chronology of the man who was born of humble parents in Arezzo and died a great man in the city he helped to beautify: Florence.

His soberly written narrative is interspersed with reflections on the sack of Rome, Florentine humanism, the politics of the Medicis, royal rivalries, progress in Etruscology, and real estate in mid-16th century Arezzo — all of them central to an understanding of the subject.

Some of Le Mollé's more interesting reflections focus on the vocabulary, style and aesthetic conceptions of the Lives, in which Vasari, for the first time, tried to adduce place, climate and environment as explanations for human behaviour. He wrote, for instance, that the air of Florence was unique in that it "itself produces ingenious and subtle minds, by eliminating that coarse coat of rust against which nature itself is helpless".

Conversely, Rome has an "unhealthy" air which "eats into marble and makes pictures age prematurely: imagine what it may do to people who work there continually."

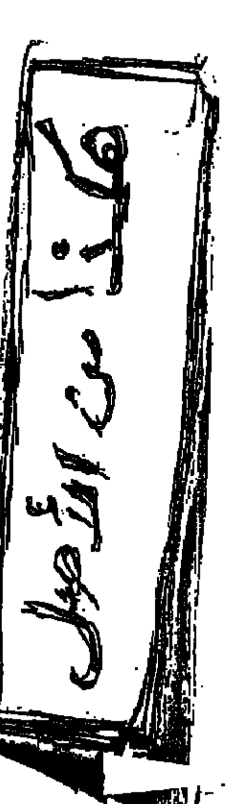
Le Mollé produces some remarkably good stuff on the kind of figure that Vasari became, at once painter, architect, courtier and privy councillor. He analyses the tyrannical behaviour of grand duke Cosimo de' Medici and shows how Vasari conceived and executed a programme in which the monument and the image were propaganda tools.

Painting suffered the consequences of that system. It abounded in repetition, stereotypes and artificial theatricality, as that was the only way of satisfying the demand for religious or political allegories, saints and mythological scenes. Surprise was anathema and novelty kept at arm's length, while Mannerism's strangeness was transmogrified into spectacular rhetoric.

Vasari is certainly entitled to a degree of posthumous fame. Not content with transforming the Palazzo Vecchio, he designed the courtyard and loggia of Florence's Galleria degli Uffizi, as well as the Palazzo and Piazza dei Cavalieri in Pisa. For a writer, that wasn't bad going.

(February 2)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani



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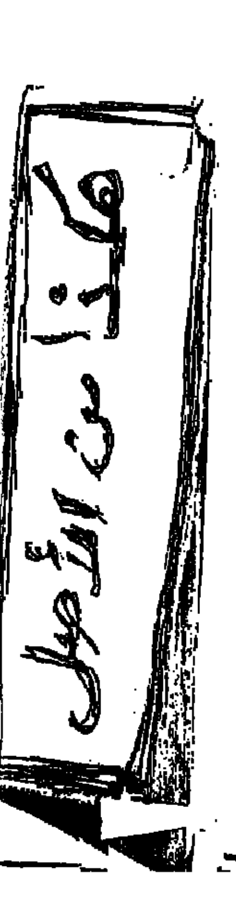
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Scaling the heights of human madness

Deyan Sudjic looks at the seductive power of high-rise monuments

SOMETHING remarkable happened to the global balance of cultural power last month. Competing teams of Korean and Japanese contractors, working continuously by swelteringly humid tropical day and arc-lit night for three years, finally topped out the twin towers of the Petronas Centre in Kuala Lumpur. With their Bangladeshi workforce earning just a few dollars a day, collapsing exhausted to sleep in beds newly vacated by the next shift, directed by Australian foremen and German engineers, they had done it at last.

For the first time since the Gothic cathedrals were built, the world's tallest structure is no longer in the West. From the centre of what was once a sleepy colonial city, the towers erupt skyward like fireworks, leaving a trail 85 floors high that dominates every view of the horizon from Kuala Lumpur's elevated highways as well as its twisting lanes, where rain storms still leave cars ankle deep in red mud. With heavy nods to Islamic geometry, it looks uncomfortably like a couple of giant extruded pineapples, tempered by a spidery bridge at the 41st floor that comes straight from a sword-and-sorcery strip cartoon.

The design is the work of Cesar Pelli, the Argentine-born, American architect who built Britain's tallest structure, Canary Wharf, as well as Manhattan's World Financial Centre. But this is not primarily an exercise in architecture. It is the assertion of political power in steel, marble and glass. The Petronas Centre has eclipsed Chicago's Sears Tower, previously the world's tallest building, for the express purpose of demonstrating, in the most conspicuous way, the determination of the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohammed, to be taken seriously as a figure on the world stage.

In the process, the development has swallowed up the elegant racecourse at the heart of a city that is frantically reinventing itself as a metropolis. It has also provoked serious worries among international bankers that Mahathir's edifice complex may signal that Malaysia's decade-long boom is turning to bust. Exactly who is going to occupy all those millions of square feet of office space?

For America, which invented the art of skyscraper building, the prospect of Malaysian hubris is little compensation for being overtaken by an upstart Asian nation of just 19 million people. Skyscrapers are as much an essential part of America's identity as the Coke bottle, baseball and the Marlboro cowboy.

The golden age of skyscraper building up to the 1930s saw the construction in New York of the gothic skyrocket of the Woolworth Tower, the chromed steel art deco Chrysler Tower, and the massive Empire State Building — all of them icons of America. In the early years of the 20th century, they were the essence of modernity. The rest of the planet went green with envy, and rushed desperately to acquire this extraordinary American invention, the price of entry, so it seemed, into the modern world.

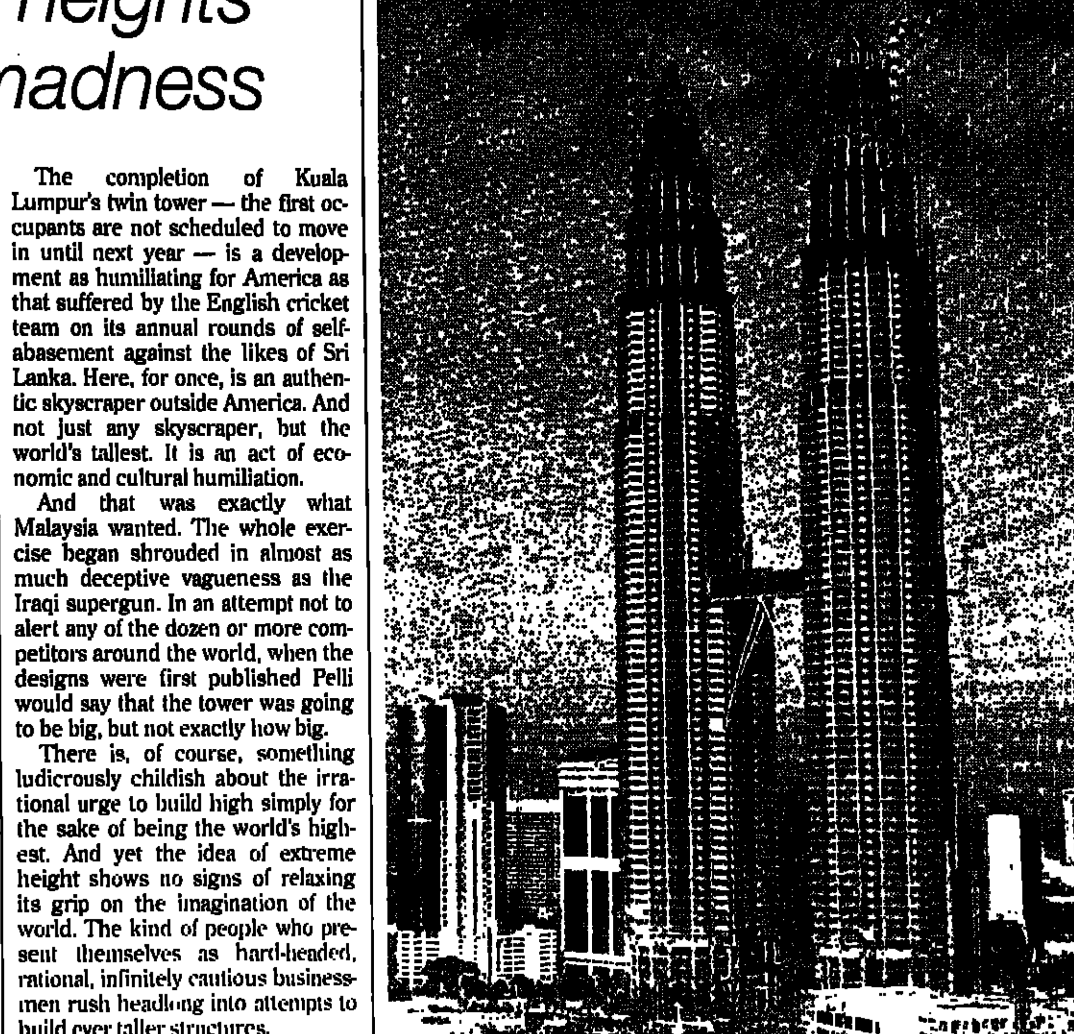
The completion of Kuala Lumpur's twin tower — the first occupants are not scheduled to move in until next year — is a development as humiliating for America as that suffered by the English cricket team on its annual rounds of self-abasement against the likes of Sri Lanka. Here, for once, is an authentic skyscraper outside America. And not just any skyscraper, but the world's tallest. It is an act of economic and cultural humiliation.

And that was exactly what Malaysia wanted. The whole exercise began shrouded in almost as much deceptive vagueness as the Iraqi supergun. In an attempt not to alert any of the dozen or more competitors around the world, when the designs were first published Pelli would say that the tower was going to be big, but not exactly how big.

There is, of course, something ludicrously childish about the irrational urge to build high simply for the sake of being the world's highest. And yet the idea of extreme height shows no signs of relaxing its grip on the imagination of the world. The kind of people who present themselves as hard-headed, rational, infinitely cautious businessmen rush headlong into attempts to build ever taller structures.

These are, moreover, structures that make no economic sense. Extreme height inevitably carries cost penalties and creates buildings that are hard to use efficiently. They cannot be let out until they are all finished, so large sections remain empty, earning no revenue. And extreme height also means a much larger percentage of each floor being devoted to lifts and structure than is the case for more modest buildings. But these are considerations that everyone, from Mahathir to Donald Trump, shrug off without a thought, so hypnotised are they by the thought of the atavistic pleasure of owning the tallest object on earth.

It is perhaps the uncomfortable revelation of the more basic impulses behind human nature that makes architects so ambivalent about skyscrapers. They may be the best chance an architect ever gets to make a landmark, but they are rarely the kind of mark an architect would like to make. For the most part, architects have found very little to get a handle on in the design of the skyscraper. You are reduced to the vapid object. There is very little of interest going on inside, just endless repeated floor plans. The facade is a clipped-on cosmetic. And there is a curious loss of scale. Once past the first 20 or so storeys, the architect faces diminishing aesthetic returns. The difference between a tall building and a very tall building is simply the difference between one large, bland box and another.



Twin peaks: the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur PHOTO: DAVID LOH

You can see the history of the high-rise in three essential stages. There was the stone age of the early days, when architects in America — trained at the very finest European schools in the art of well-mannered, gentlemanly design — laboured mightily to discover an appropriate architectural dress from the past to make decent the rude, thrusting height that engineering made possible. Then there was the glass age of Mies van der Rohe, who swept aside all this squeamishness with the frankness of steel and glass. And now we have the age of parody.

What made Pelli attractive to the Malaysians was his skill at resurrecting the essentials of the old skyscrapers of the era of Gotham City, and recycling them for a modern audience. He has gone around the world designing evocations of the 1930s skyscrapers. In less skilled hands, it is a recipe for disaster.

Hong Kong has them in spades. The Wanchai Centre — after Kuala Lumpur, the tallest tower in Asia — is a flashy art deco and neon evocation in the most heavy-handed way of the Empire State Building. Now the city plans to leapfrog back to the to the top with a 500-metre tower that looks like a crude cartoon version of the Chrysler building.

The Prince of Wales once asked Pelli why Canary Wharf had to be so tall. The answer that Pelli was too polite to give was that the London docklands development needed a skyscraper as its centrepiece for the entirely irrational, and yet essential, purpose of impressing the sceptics. It made nowhere suddenly into somewhere. It is exactly what is happening on a global scale.

While America is still hooked on the idea of height — Manhattan had a tilt at the prospect of eclipsing the Sears Tower in the Bonfire of the Vanities era — it is now the booming cities of Asia in which the rush for heights is concentrated. The tallest towers in the world are planned for cities that few in the West could place on a map, let alone pronounce.

Even the twin towers of Kuala Lumpur will not remain as the world's tallest for long. A structure that will top them is already under construction in Shanghai, while three even taller more projects are on the drawing board — in Moscow, in Beijing, and, most recently, the plan newly unveiled in Melbourne for a 2,000ft structure, designed by Denton Corker and Marshall, which would tower over the Chicago Sears tower by the height of the NatWest tower in London.

The brainchild of a flamboyant construction industry tycoon with a history that could politely be described as chequered, the Melbourne tower is the perfect synthesis of ego, vanity and architectural self-confidence, a mix that has characterised all the most memorable skyscrapers.

This is not simply a very tall office building, on to which has been grafted a very tall hotel. It's a piercing cry for attention by an individual developer, and by Melbourne, a city that has nurtured something of an inferiority complex ever since its upstart rival, Sydney, built its opera house.

High and mighty

481ft — Great Pyramid, Giza, Egypt, 2,580 BC
525ft — Lincoln Cathedral, 1307
984ft — Eiffel Tower, 1889
1,046ft — Chrysler Building, 1930
1,250ft — Empire State, 1931
1,368ft — World Trade Center, 1972
1,454ft — Sears Tower, 1974
1,483ft — Petronas Twin Towers, 1996

Child of the revolution

OBITUARY
Anna Larina

THERE ARE few happy endings in Russian history, but the life of Anna Larina proved that, for a few, history comes right in the end. For 50 years she was the hidden widow of a forgotten man, Nikolai Bukharin, theoretician of the Russian revolution and member of the Bolshevik central committee, who became the most prominent victim of Stalin's purges.

Anna Larina lived to tell the tale — and to deliver Bukharin's final letter to the country he had helped create, and to see him honoured by the Communist party he had fought to steer away from dictatorship towards socialist humanism. With her death, at the age of 82, the last link to the inner circle of those who made the revolution has gone.

Larina was a true child of the revolution. After her mother's death from tuberculosis, she had been adopted by an aunt, Yelena, and her invalid husband, Yuri Larin. She was looked after by her grandfather while her parents, committed revolutionaries, spent the first world war in exile in Geneva. Only after the 1917 February revolution did they return to Russia. Then, when the revolutionary government moved to Moscow in 1919, she moved in with her parents to the Hotel Metropol, where they remained until 1927.

It was here that she met the leading figures of the revolution: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev as well as other central committee members came to discuss politics and tactics with her bedridden father. But of all the senior Bolsheviks who came to the Larins' apartment, it was Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin, a close friend and colleague of her father, who attracted Anna.

The 42-year-old Bukharin and the teenage Anna fell in love in 1930 when Bukharin, ousted from the Politburo, stripped of the editorship of Pravda and of his position as head of the Comintern, was already being accused of leading the "rightist Trotskyite opposition" to Stalin's forced collectivisation and industrialisation.

When they eventually married in 1934, Anna was plunged into the nightmarish world of Stalin's paranoia where her life and fate hinged on that of her husband.

Bukharin was arrested in February 1937. Larina, as the wife of an enemy of the people, was arrested later that year. She spent the next 20 years in prison or exile.

Larina spent three years in an underground cell in the Lubyanka, then in 1941 she was sent to the Gulag. Released in 1945, she was exiled in Siberia and despite being granted leave to return to Moscow in 1956 she refused to do so until 1959, when under Khrushchev's amnesty to the victims of Stalin's Terror, she was fully pardoned. Her son, Yuri, brought up in orphanages, finally found his mother in 1956. Together, the two campaigned quietly for Bukharin's rehabilitation.

Bukharin was officially rehabilitated on February 4, 1988. In reviewing Bukharin's trial in 1988, a Soviet judge called him "a fighter to the end". So was his widow.

Isobel Montgomery

Anna Larina, born January 27, 1914; died February 24, 1996

Hammering home a message . . . left to right, Andrea Needham, Joanne Wilson, Lotta Kronlid and Angie Zelter
PHOTOMONTAGE. ROGER TOOTH

Battle of doves and Hawks

Peaceful protests did not stop Britain selling lethal jets to the Indonesian regime, so four women took matters into their own hands. **Neil Godwin** reports

IN THE early hours of January 29, four women converged on the British Aerospace military site at Warton, Lancashire. They snipped a hole in the perimeter fence, waited for a security patrol to pass, and, in clear view of closed-circuit cameras, three of them prised open the doors of a hangar.

Lotta Kronlid, Joanne Wilson and Andrea Needham, from the Ploughshares Movement, headed straight for Hawk jet ZH955. They carried eye-witness accounts of how similar BaE aircraft had been used in East Timor on bombing raids against defenceless villages. And they carried hammers.

At first, their blows were frenzied. They did not know how much time they would have before the security guards arrived. To their amazement, dents in the fuselage quickly developed into puncture holes. They smashed millions of pounds worth of radar equipment and missile guidance systems.

Having remained undetected for more than 30 minutes, the women started to relax. They stuck photographs to the jet's cockpit, showing the victims of the Santa Cruz massacre in November 1991, when Indonesian troops opened fire on a peaceful protest, killing 270 people.

Jet ZH 955 was to be the first of 24 Hawks due to be delivered to Indonesia later this year. When the $750 million deal was signed in 1993 (in defiance of 10 UN resolutions), the then Defence Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, spoke of "splendid news for British Aerospace and its workers".

Such a deal, he said, would enhance "good relations between the UK and Indonesia". The fact that 200,000 East Timorese had been killed by the Suharto regime since 1975 was overlooked. A BAe spokesman reminded critics of the deal that Indonesia was not on the UK's banned list.

For Britain, the price of securing the Hawk deal was a $100 million aid package to Indonesia to build the Samarinda power station in Kalimantan. Aside from displacing more of Kalimantan's indigenous Dayak people, the project is likely to speed up the deforestation and population of one of South-east Asia's last remaining rainforests.

Both the Government and BAe insist that the Hawk is only a "trainer" aircraft and is unsuitable for military purposes in East Timor. However, BAe's own marketing literature trumpets the plane's "significant ground attack capability". Hawks, they say, can be tailored to carry a wide range of weapons, including cluster and fire bombs.

Joanne Wilson, a borough councillor in Kirkby, Merseyside, says: "Many children, women and men have been killed by British weapons supplied by British companies with the approval and support of the British government. I am angry, ashamed and distressed at Britain's complicity."

Andrea Needham, a nurse and peace activist, also from Kirkby, says: "For over three years, I have been trying to stop the Hawk sales. I have written letters, held vigils, signed petitions, talked at public meetings, and asked the police to investigate British Aerospace for contravening the Genocide Act. Despite this, the sale is going ahead. I, therefore, feel that I have no option but to disarm these planes myself."

WHEN the security guards still hadn't arrived after more than an hour, the women notified the press. There was no intention of slipping away under the cover of darkness.

The women were arrested next to the planes, and charged with breaking and entering and criminal damage to the tune of £2 million. The fourth woman, Angie Zelter, who was working on the outside was arrested on charges of conspiracy to cause damage, having publicly stated her intention to continue the work.

The Ploughshares Movement was started in 1980 in America, when eight people disarmed two nuclear warheads in Pennsylvania. The East Timor Ploughshares Action (Seeds of Hope) was the 56th "action worldwide, and the first all-woman one". As with the previous 55 "conversions", the women accept full responsibility for their act of disarmament, and welcome the opportunity to explain their reasons in public. In 16 years, activists have hammered more than $6 million worth of "swords into ploughshares" — and received a collective total of 156 years in prison.

While being fairly broad in its political membership — ranging from local politicians to members of religious orders, from non-violent anarchists to social democrats — Ploughshares activists tend to present a radical critique of both the West's military and economic orders, seeing the two as thoroughly entwined and mutually dependent. In this respect, the movement is largely influenced by North American radical Catholicism, the political writings of Noam Chomsky, and the non-violent radical, feminist and anarchist movements of the past 30 years.

January's "disarmament" was the third in Britain. In March 1990, Stephen Hancock and Mike Hutchinson, wearing Mickey Mouse ears, broke into USAF Upper Heyford and disarmed an F-111 with hammers. "I was shaking with fear, and yet there is no way of pretending I am not far more frightened of what is happening and will continue to happen, and the unimaginable terrors that might well happen, in the face of our inactivity," wrote Hancock.

Three years later, Chris Cole was arrested at BAe's Stevenage site for causing $135,000 damage to aircraft. In the first of two trials, Cole contested his right to use force in the prevention of a crime, as, he claimed, was enshrined in the Criminal Law Act (1967). The judge, Stephen Sedgley, instructed the jury to use their conscience, common sense and common humanity in reaching a verdict. There was a hung jury and, for a time, a moral chink appeared in BAe's armour. But Cole eventually received eight months' imprisonment.

To British Aerospace, the Warton incident must seem like an open and shut case. But as the four women were driven away to Lytham St Annes police station, each of them carried with them their own "indictment", their own version of events.

The Ploughshares Movement can be contacted at Box 111, Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RQ; The East Timor Ploughshares Action (Seeds of Hope) is at 55 Queen Margaret Grove, London N1 4PZ

Turning passion into prose

OBITUARY
Marguerite Duras

MARGUERITE DURAS, who has died aged 81, was one of post-war France's most gifted and fiercely independent creative talents. She was born Marguerite Donnadieu in Gia Dinh, near Saigon in French Indochina. As a girl, she spoke fluent Vietnamese and, save for occasional visits to the Gascon village of Duras (which she took as her *nom-de-plume*), she lived and was educated in the Far East until she was 16 when she returned to France to study mathematics and law at the Sorbonne.

In 1935, she became a civil servant in the French Colonial Office. Three years later, she married the leftwing intellectual Robert Antelme from whom she separated in 1946. Her first book, Les Impudents, was published in 1943 as a result of the personal intervention of Raymond Queneau.

By this stage of the war, she was involved in communist and existentialist resistance circles: on one occasion she kept watch while Camus retrieved important papers from a house and claimed later to have saved the life of the then resistance fighter, François Mitterrand. After the Liberation she remained on the edges of the smart factions, and was expelled from the Communist party in 1949 with other "bourgeois individualists". It was then that she consolidated her highly personal notion of total revolution based on personal freedom.

During the 1950s a series of elliptical novels led her to be associated with the "new realism" movement, though it was the film Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959), directed by Alain Resnais from a Duras script, which gave her an international reputation. During the 1960s, she continued to pare her fiction to essentials, but with Le Ravissement de Lol V Stein (1964) she delved deep into her psyche in a way which she described as emotionally dangerous for her. Meanwhile, she raised her political profile by opposing France's Algerian policy and was an enthusiastic supporter of the student revolution in 1968 which she translated into politico-personal terms in Détruire, Dit-Elle (1969).

By this time, she had widened her range to include theatre and cinema and, in 1971, gave up the novel because it was arbitrary and "impossible". She took up feminism, involved herself in the pro-abortion campaign, struck up a rewarding partnership with Madeleine Renaud for whom she wrote several plays, and began making films which must count among the most original and experimental uses of the medium since the time of the pioneering silents.

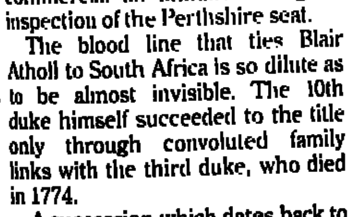
In the early 1980s, she published a series of brief, opaque fictions which even admirers found difficult. Then, when she seemed in danger of losing contact with her public, she wrote L'Amant (The Lover), a lucid evocation of her adolescence which won her not only the Prix Goncourt in 1984 but a new, young audience which warmed to her strange, "impossible" world.

She was regularly accused, even by the French, of intellectualism, though this is a difficult charge to substantiate. Generalisations were not her style and though she regularly expressed views, sometimes wildly, to journalists, she was one of the few modern French writers never to publish a literary, philosophical or political manifesto. Her ideas are embedded in her unemphatic fictions, which may lack warmth and human feeling but swell with passionate involvement.

Her "texts", which are simultaneously novels, film-scripts and plays, deal in disembodied terms with a world of highly personal myths: the dam raised by her mother against the Pacific tides, the image of a cool, self-contained colonial adulteress who symbolises transgression, and the figure of a beggar-girl who stands for the poverty and degradation of the East.

She communicated a sense of the "impossible" through incantatory symbols of sea and forest which turn her prose into poetry. But above all, she developed the notion of existential being into a concept of the sacred which, in many ways, is the key to her work: the rational world denies those human and "communifying" values which equate the personal with the public. The Frenchwoman's personal tragedy in Hiroshima Mon Amour is qualitatively the same as the public tragedy of Hiroshima; the degradation of the lady of L'Amant is the same as that of the beggar woman. That is what the collective spirit means.

Duras dealt with big subjects with passionate detachment. She gave the impression of never doubting herself or her purpose, and


Duras: international reputation

appeared secure and serene. In fact, her life was never easy and her rebellious personality led her to conflict, personal tragedy and a drinking problem which she discussed frankly in La Vie Matérielle (1987).

Despite a tracheotomy, her voice — flat, hypnotic, elusive in its harmonics — was not to be silenced. She reacted vigorously against the "betrayal" of Jean-Jacques Annaud's film of The Lover and rewrote the story as she now saw it as L'Amant De La Chine Du Nord (1992), the most finished of her late works. She remained impervious to public opinion, which was sometimes hostile but mostly admiring of a writer who became an international feminist icon and a symbol of uncompromising French style.

Conscious of her fading energies, she published a last slim volume in the autumn of 1995, a kind of valediction which over-rode the pain and, reluctantly but elegantly, let go. "The impossible", she once told me, "is impossible today. But it is the history of the future." When that history comes to be written, Marguerite Duras will surely have a large place in it.

David Coward

Marguerite Duras, writer, born April 4, 1914; died March 3, 1996

South African inherits Scots dukedom

Erlend Clouston

AN ELDERLY South African land surveyor has inherited the 293-year-old dukedom of Atholl, complete with Europe's only private army and an apartment in a 13th century Highland castle.

The elevation of John Murray, aged 67, followed the death last week of his third cousin, George Ian Murray, the 10th duke, at the age of 64.

The news was received with dismay by Harold Brooks-Baker, publishing director of Burke's Peerage. "This points up the weaknesses in the peerage system," he said. "It is a sad day for the other dukes I have talked to — they are horrified."

Scotland was more relaxed about the prospect of a commoner succeeding to the country's sixth most senior title. "These things happen all the time, there's nothing unusual about it," said the Lord Lyon King of Arms, Sir Malcolm Innes of Edinsight.

Mr Murray has not been greatly enriched by his good fortune. Just before he died it was revealed that the bachelor 10th duke, a former chairman of the Westminster Press group, had made over his ancestral home and virtually all of his 70,000 acres to a charitable trust "to preserve it for the people".

The revelation sparked speculation of a family falling-out, with Mr Murray depicted as the mercenary outsider punished for displaying too commercial an attitude during an inspection of the Perthshire seat.

The blood line that ties Blair Atholl to South Africa is so dilute as to be almost invisible. The 10th duke himself succeeded to the title only through convoluted family links with the third duke, who died in 1774.

A succession which dates back to a medieval Celtic earldom has always had a strong soap opera element. In 1746 the Jacobite Lord George Murray besieged his brother, the Hanoverian second duke, in Blair Castle — a family feud ended by the marriage of the respective son and daughter.

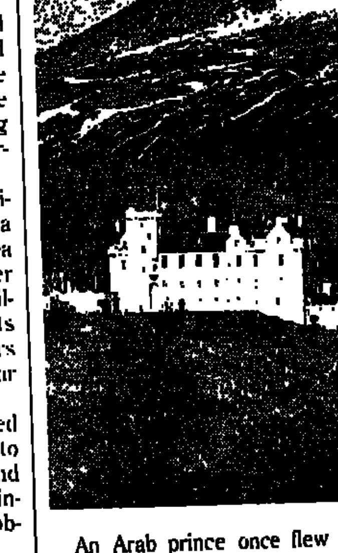

The late duke reviewing his private army, the Atholl Highlanders, at Blair Atholl (below) in 1988

The 11th duke will inherit several thousand acres his predecessor had kept for his own use. If he wants, he can assume the colonelship of the Atholl Highlanders, the 110-strong domestic militia which parades irregularly for delighted tourists.

The "soldiers" were given semi-official status by Queen Victoria during a royal expedition to the area in 1845. Although they have never fired a shot in anger they have an illustrious pedigree as descendants of the 77th Atholl Highlanders raised to fight in the American war of independence.

George Murray, who reckoned he could trace his ancestry back to the Picts, was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. When he inherited the dukedom, he was an obscure junior executive in London.

He rose to be chairman of the provincial newspaper group Westminster Press from 1974-93 and a director of Pearson Longman. He was also chairman of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, president of the Scottish Landowners Federation, a member of the Red Deer Commission and president of the National Trust for Scotland.



An Arab prince once flew uninvited into his grounds with an auctioneer, eager to buy the estate. People had been advising him to sell, but one of his last acts was to safeguard his inheritance in perpetuity.

The South African Murrays initially spoke of contesting this in court. But it looks as if the guile of the Picts has once again carried the day.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHAT'S* the point of having your cake if you are not able to eat it?**

THE ORIGINAL axiom was "you cannot eat your cake and have it too", which made perfect sense. Once you have enjoyed something ephemeral (whether cake or youth), it's futile wishing you could have it back. Its present form seems to come from an American habit of changing a phrase into something quite meaningless: one of our less desirable exports. — *Nicholas O'Dell, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, USA*

THE POINT of a cake that you can eat and have too is that it can be eaten again the next day, and so on ad infinitum. This subject is treated at some length in the classic work of Australian children's literature, The Magic Pudding. — *John Shortridge, Blackburn, Australia*

***WHY DO* cockroaches always die on their backs?**

COCKROACHES don't lie on their backs to die; they die because they have fallen on their backs. Once inverted on a smooth surface they die of exhaustion in attempting to right themselves. As to how they fall over, look for adjacent smooth vertical surfaces or evidence of internecine warfare. I once watched a duel between two oil beetles on a school playground in which the victor walked away and the loser was left inverted, shaking its limbs in impotent rage. — *Gareth Butcher, Norwich*

***AT WHAT* event did Queen Victoria say "We are not amused"?**

AT A gala luncheon in honour of the visiting Australian Prime Minister. He tweaked her bra strap. — *Peter Hakewill, Sydney, Australia*

***IN JERSEY*, information signs are written in Portuguese as well as English. Why?**

THERE ARE estimated to be about 10,000 Portuguese nationals resident in the island, about 12 per cent of the population. The Portuguese are attracted to Jersey mainly to work in the low-paid horticultural and tourist industries.

Guernsey, the neighbouring island, also has a large Portuguese population. Channel Television, the local independent broadcaster, has a Portuguese language news programme that is transmitted weekly. — *T A Guille, Guernsey, Channel Islands*

Any answers?

***WHAT* is the difference between Gross National Product and Gross Domestic Product?** — *Glyn Baulss, Espoo, Finland*

***WHY* is the long-running children's TV programme called Blue Peter?** — *(Dr) M L Cooper, Ilford, Essex*

***DOES* dyslexia affect the Chinese, who read from top to bottom?** — *Diana Gould, Cirencester, Gloucestershire*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ.

Letter from Namibia Margaret Bradley

Drain on liquid assets

IN THE middle of January the rain fell in torrents: silver sheets of it made driving dangerous and pools collected in desert hollows, startling into life the ephemeral blooms of the morning star.

The dams began to fill and, even if the figures seemed less than encouraging — this dam 11 per cent full, that one 14 per cent — the relief of the population was almost tangible. So, with the plight of the farmers eased temporarily, the papers began to re-investigate the corruption scandal linked with the last drought. Had various prominent figures misappropriated drought aid funds from abroad in order to dig boreholes on their ostrich farms? Had the government instigated a cover-up to prevent international donors from becoming disillusioned and cancelling aid?

Yet the real water crisis facing Namibia is less obvious to the people because it lies far below ground. There is, however, one place where the hidden problem is apparent: Arnhem cave some 80km south of Windhoek international airport.

When I left home, a copper gold sun hung in a vivid azure sky. At the horizon the molten air seemed to be flowing on to a deliquescent road: no wonder, with this relentless heat. Though the white bull at Arnhem farm was still alive, cattle were dying in their tracks on the communal lands round Karasburg, and the bull was so thin that his ribs ridged his skin like a washboard.

Yet when the first missionaries and traders came, herds of 50 to 80 thousand head were common: the nomadic Nama and Herero knew how to conserve the fragile flora and husband the scarce water resources. A new religion, which changed the social structures, the Cape trade, which valued ivory and ostrich feathers, and settled communities soon put an end to the fragile equilibrium. By 1860, herds were only one tenth the size while permanent water holes were degraded and polluted.

Now, as the population increases and people's living standards rise, water is in ever greater demand though the resources are running out. Small dams on private farms have proliferated, capturing the waters above ground instead of allowing it to seep slowly seawards.

Bore holes, dug with the best of intentions but inadequate understanding, draw settlers from afar. Though for a time, the women no longer have to trek for miles in search of water, the relentless browsing of their cattle, sheep and goats never allows the vegetation to recover. Little by little, food stuffs run out and the water table drops.

On his farm, Jannie Bekker took me down into Arnhem cave, the largest in Namibia. Home for countless ages to five different kinds of bats, it still holds thousands of tons of nitrate-rich guano, which Jannie's grandfather mined in the thirties, not as fertiliser but as an ingredient of explosives.

As we descend, we pass through many caverns, each with its own community of bats, until 100 metres down we come to a great rock hall.

"*AS A* boy I swam here in the purest, crystal-clear water," said Jannie. "It came a third of the way up the wall. If you clamber down there and go round the corner you'll see the remaining small pool." But he was wrong. The pool had vanished, leaving not even a stain of damp guano behind. The level has dropped perhaps 20 metres in 40 years. The arithmetic is frightening.

"Do you have serious water problems at home?" I asked as I emerged caked in sticky guano — it's a hot cave, 24°C all year round, and sweat attracts the dust particles like a magnet.

"No, never," he said. "We have six boreholes." But Jannie Bekker isn't tapping the water on his land. He's mining it. And, eventually, even the greatest of mines is played out. Will the Bekkers' children still be able to run a farm, pump up water for their animals during a drought and welcome guests to their holiday bungalows when they are as old as Jannie is now? The same story is being repeated all over Namibia.

It has, in fact, been quite a good year for rain so far, but even if it had been the best ever, Jannie Bekker would not be able to bathe in his private subterranean pool. Both he and I know he will never see it again.

A Country Diary

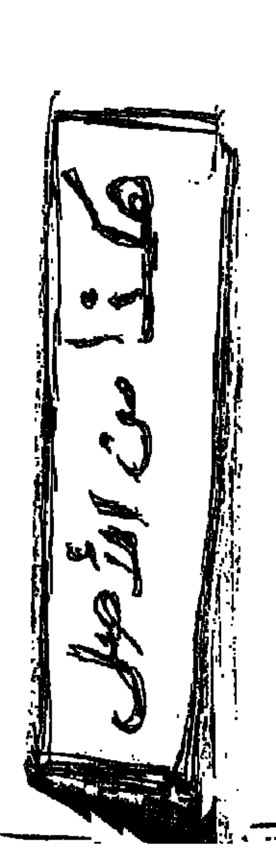
Mark Shrosbree

NIKKO, JAPAN: One of the few bargains to be had living in Tokyo is the train ticket to Nikko, a historic city 100km north of the capital. The winter here in Tokyo has been mild and dry, but Nikko just slips into the Japan sea climatic zone. While Tokyo is warmed all winter by Pacific currents, the Japan sea has south-moving currents, bringing icy weather and heavy snow falls. This year has been particularly bad, with up to 0.7m of fresh snow, night after night.

We took a single-track branch-line train up the valley of Ashio, and stepped out into a world of snow and the derelict buildings of the long-closed Ashio copper mine. Pollution from the mine denuded the valley of trees, and subsequent erosion has left the mountains with only crumbling rock. In a feat of environmental engineering, the government is replacing the lost soil with peat. The project is working. The valley sides are now mostly covered with birch and pine, and the rivers are clearing.

We hiked up a northward track, shaking off the disorientation at being so close to Tokyo but in such a different world. A serow, or Japanese antelope, darted across our path, then skipped lightly up the snowy slope, its large, bushy white tail winking at us. Then we heard the distinctive high-pitched call of deer, and saw numerous small herds foraging in the snow. Red-faced monkeys in thick winter fur raced up from the river, then hung and bounced in trees, seemingly showing off to the passively staring deer.

At the head of the track we put on snowshoes and followed deer tracks over the ridge and down through powder snow to Lake Chuzenji. Thousands of plates of ice tinkled like wind charms on the rippling lake as we walked out of the winter world and back to the toil of Tokyo.



Obsession with a haunting gaze

Velázquez's portrait of Pope Innocent X, on loan to the National Gallery, unsettles the spectator. Just look at what it did to Francis Bacon, writes **Adrian Searle**

CURRENTLY on loan to the National Gallery, until May 19, are a number of works from the Doria Pamphilj Gallery in Rome, one of Italy's oldest and most important private collections. Founded by Giovanni Battista Pamphilj, Pope Innocent X, the collection, housed in the Doria Pamphilj Palace, is a guide-book must.

At the National Gallery, hung in a single room, is a small and somewhat disappointing selection of highlights from the collection. That said, there is a fine early Titian, Judith With The Head Of Holophernes, a troublesome double portrait by Raphael, Caravaggio's Rest During The Flight Into Egypt and Guercino's gruesome painting of the wounded martyr Tancred, which aficionados of gore and suppurating wounds should not miss.

So far, so good. But it is Innocent X's own portrait, painted by Diego Velázquez during the artist's second visit to Rome in 1650, that forms the centrepiece of the temporary loan. Francis Bacon called it one of the greatest portraits in the world. It is a unique and terrifying image.

There he sits, glowering and suspicious on his throne, dressed in his crimson cape and crimson cap, the full papal rig-out, a voluminous white apron frothing out from under his cape, his arms in their soft white sleeves resting on his chair, his hands poised, relaxed but claw-like. White light catches in rivulets and puddles across the folds of his cape. The man in red and white is seated against the darker plush of his throne. His face reflects the redness around him and also perhaps reflects his spleen — a contemporary writer, Giacinto Gigli, said that Innocent X's face revealed his severity and harshness, while another contemporary said he had the expression of a cunning lawyer.

To either side of him, framing him, stand portrait busts, one in whitish marble, the other a darker stone, by Bernini and Alessandro Algardi; they depict the same man, the same head, the same opaque mentality. Velázquez's Pope, for all the pomp and despite his position in the centre of the biggest wall in the room, is somehow diminished by all the framing devices. The painting seems smaller than expected, a bit dowdy and in somewhat poor condition. Is this the painting that so excited and obsessed Bacon?

Pope Innocent X as portrayed by Velázquez in 1650 (right) and by Francis Bacon in 1962



Bacon never actually saw Velázquez's masterpiece. Talking of his visit to Rome, he claimed illness and emotional fatigue for never having visited the gallery where the painting usually hangs, in a small side-room, and where one's encounter with Pope Innocent is uncomfortably close. Bacon only ever knew the painting from postcards and art book reproductions. "I think it is one of the greatest portraits that have ever been made, and I became obsessed by it. I buy book after book with this illustration in it . . . because it just haunts me," he told the art historian David Sylvester, in one of their remarkable interviews. Although it is hard to imagine Bacon being intimidated by anything, this painting actually frightened him. Bacon expressed "a fear of seeing the reality of the Velázquez after my tampering with it, seeing this marvellous painting and thinking of the stupid things one had done with it".

Bacon painted his first of many homages to it in 1949, a close-up of the head and shoulders, enclosed in a kind of booth or tank, his mouth opened in a scream. A tassel, a banal little object on a string, which might belong to a curtain or a bell-pull, dangles in front of his nose. In 1965, Bacon painted his final version of the seated Pope: a Dalek, a Dr Strangelove, his face a gnarl of painted swerves and spatters, his body inseparable from the chair on which he sits.

BACON'S most concentrated re-workings of Velázquez, though, were completed between 1950 and 1955. In many respects they are often closely observed transcriptions, made all the more scandalous by their progressive revisions, their deformations of the original. Sometimes their faces resemble more closely a modern Pope, Pius XII, in his round-rimmed glasses, and his face in turn echoes another of Bacon's favourite images, the screaming nurse in Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin, but Velázquez's model is the father of them all. The Pope is there, too, in Bacon's paintings of besuited businessmen, also completed during the early 1950s. Innocent X was a presence in Bacon's work that refused to go away.

And the original, indeed, does refuse to go away. At the National Gallery, surrounded by works by Titian, Raphael, Caravaggio and Guercino, it is Innocent's presence that commands the room. Self-possessed, and possessing everything around him with his gaze, his unappeasable expression of mistrust sets him apart and sucks us in. This is a painting that looks at us more than we look at it. It is, of course, the manner in which Velázquez painted his Pope that gives him his gravitas. Nothing else in the room matches the authority with which the work is painted and the authority of the subject. In Velázquez's depiction, in the breadth of the treatment of the figure and in the nauseating precision and control of its tonality and its limited chromatic range, there is a great deal of quiet violence. But it is the Pope's look that surely fascinated Bacon, and fascinates us. It is a judging, terrifying look.

Mind-bending feats of mind-blowing banality

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

MY PERSONAL favourite was Bruce, a bulky bloke in Lycra and blue specs, who was going to try to break the world speed record. For cycling on the spot, bless him.

He had been psychically trained for the attempt by Uri Geller, who was now whipping us all up to a fine froth. "You are the masses. There could be 10 million of you out there now. On the count of three, we are all going to start shouting 'Go, Bruce! Go!' " The masses shouted "Go, Bruce! Go!" rather quietly, the way the British studio audiences do, and Bruce started pedalling like mad, his little legs a blur.

The speedometer registered nothing. "This is very exciting! Very tense!" said David Frost, whose company made the programme. It still registered nothing after a couple more attempts with Bruce straining every sinew, Uri contorted in concentration and the masses shouting "Go, Bruce! Go!" This debacle was attributed to the kinetic power generated by Uri and another Israeli telepath, Oren, knocking out the computer. It is a pity they did not knock out the camera.

The well-named Beyond Belief was brought to you by Carlton Television but you could have guessed that by some mystic power without being told. Ronnie and Oren were a father-and-son team. Ronnie, the more vibrant player of the two, would exhibit paroxysms of delight and amazement at his son's success. "The amazing telepathic powers of Oren, who can see telepathically through his father's eyes," as Frost put it without any peradventure or perhaps. Unfortunately, Frostie, you are looking at someone who remembers the Piddingtons. Sydney and Lesley Piddington, a husband-and-wife team, used to do this sort of thing in *planes*, one on the ground, one in mid-air. We were terribly impressed at the time.

Ronnie's English was not so much broken as reduced to flying atoms, so he was able to phrase his coded questions in, shall we say, a curly kind of way. "No, no, what she have in her hand? Take it up" . . . "Is very nice but what's the colour of shirt here?" . . . "You can say the colour of her underwear. So try." Even Beyond Belief balked at checking the colour of the lady's underwear.

Then there was Miroslav, The Human Magnet, who stuck saucepans on his head. "Are there other parts of the body you can use, Miroslav?" asked Frostie after the tenth saucepan or so. There are, but that is another sort of show altogether.

It made me dash away a furtive tear for the departed joys of music hall. For Peg Leg Bates, a one-legged tap dancer whose biggest hazard was knotholes in the stage, and for Edna Squire Brown And Her Educated Doves, a striptease act often disrupted by birdseed-carrying saboteurs in the audience.

It was such an undiscriminating mish-mash of the barely possible and the blatantly fake that it seems safest to laugh at the lot. However, I admit I was rather taken by Thomas of Tyne and Wear, who responded to Frost's invitation to phone in if anything unusual happened at home.

Thomas, who was clearly elderly, said sometimes in the evening he couldn't beat the pain at all but after watching Matthew Manning, the faith healer, he felt much more lissom. He'd checked this point before phoning: "I've gone into the kitchen and done a few exercises *where the wife couldn't see us*." Now that really rings true.

Bathsheba en pointe

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

IT'S THE big dilemma for conscientious ballet choreographers. While audiences maintain a stubborn preference for big three-act story ballets, companies can't dance Sleeping Beauty every night. So new ballets have to be made. Yet finding workable plots for ballet is not simple — for, as even MacMillan and Ashton have shown, most stories prove to be undanceable than otherwise.

If you're Twyla Tharp you invent your own tale (as in Mr Wordly Wise) and conceal the sketchy narrative under a blaze of dancing. If you're David Bintley, however, you scour the bookshelves.

Recently he has grappled with Cyrano and Edward II. His latest choice, for the Birmingham Royal Ballet, is Far From The Madding Crowd. This sounds like a good idea as Hardy supplies his heroine Bathsheba with three lovers, giving Bintley ample opportunities to do what ballet finds easiest — showing people falling in and out of love. But there are other things in Hardy, such as complex motivation, heavy duty philosophy and pages of description that are far less sympathetic to dance.

The ballet scores instant points with its music and design. Hayden Griffin's simple, atmospheric interiors give out on to vast distances of countryside that keep the narrative in touch with the elements, while Paul Reade's sympathetic score cues the plot with pastoral melodies, folk dances and churning climaxes.

Yet Griffen, Reade, and Bintley are fatally inclined to sanitise their material. While Hardy's novel is smudged with dirt, muddle and despair, the ballet mostly presents a jolly vista of waving milkmaids, smocked shepherds and comic rustics.

The dance rarely gets under the skin of Bathsheba's three relationships, and we seldom feel the movement throbbing with the Hardy themes of hunger and obsession.

Yet the movement is rescued by some fine moments. Bintley's mime throughout is alive and eloquent, and the choreography for the seduced and abandoned Fanny is a lovely portrait of shy, delicate hesitations. The ballet also rises to shocking melodrama in the struggle over Fanny's dead body where Troy viciously slaps away Bathsheba's consoling arms and covers the corpse with kisses.

Most importantly, Bintley gets excellent performances from his dancers. Though Kevin O'Hare's Troy overplays caddishness at the expense of sexiness, Monica Zamora convincingly shows the armour of Bathsheba's beauty being pierced by tragedy, Yuri Zukhov is a compellingly tense William Boldwood, and David Justin plays Gabriel Oak perfectly, his awkward honest gait showing you the romantic soul trapped inside the dour workman's body.

Thrilled to bits

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

FEW OPENING films at the London Film Festival have caused such consternation as Kathryn Bigelow's **Strange Days**. Now, after sinking almost without trace in America, the film opens commercially in the UK with somewhat muted expectations.

Yet on the evidence of this futuristic epic (as well as Blue Steel and the highly successful Point Break), Bigelow is clearly one of the most proficient practitioners of pyrotechnical, in-your-face film-making working today. And Strange Days, set in an anarchic Los Angeles of 1999 where tensions on the streets have reached breaking point, at least has the distinction of possessing an apocalyptic vision that easily measures up to any of those put on the screen by James Cameron, Bigelow's ex-husband, who wrote the original story with Jay Cocks.

Sequence after sequence of the movie is orchestrated with such entirely cinematic passion and careless bravura that the essential banality of both script and concept is either lost on the viewer entirely or actually pointed up, depending upon one's taste for what in some quarters has been called "techno-noir". It is so blatant that you can only love it or hate it.

The central figure, never quite lost in this garish landscape — thanks to a performance from Ralph Fiennes which suggests more than is actually in his lines — is Lenny Nero, a sleazy ex-cop.

Nero is making a good living hustling recordings made directly from people's brains, which can then be accessed by others in search of sexual or other thrills via Squid (Superconducting Quantum Interference Device). It's useful for married men who don't want the bother of an affair, and for druggies who can't afford the real buzz any more.

His own private collection preserves the happier moments of a love affair with Juliette Lewis's Faith, a scatty young singer, threatened with danger after witnessing the murder of a black activist pop star. He is also sent a virtual reality clip of a hideous rape and murder that is somehow connected to this.

Only Angela Bassett's Mace, the tough driver of an armoured limousine hired by the powerful to protect them from the street gangs, is capable of helping him. She doesn't fool about with the playback trips since it is "porno for wireheads".

The film paints a bleak, pessimistic picture of Los Angeles on the eve of the millennium which may well come to pass in one way or another. The place is full of revolting people doing revolting things to each other.

The film also contains the kind of violence — the repeated rape sequence, for instance — that one doesn't expect from Bigelow, if only because there seems so little purpose to it beyond the cheap thrills of a dystopian, genre-bending thriller.

One might have been able to treat Strange Days more seriously were it not for its blatantly opportunistic, upbeat ending and a length that causes even this frenetic kind of film-making to seem sagging and impotent. But chiefly one regrets the uses to which Bigelow's skills as a film-maker are now being put. Both The Loveless and Near Dark, her two early films made independently for virtually nothing, were original and imaginative variants of biker and western movies respectively.

Strange Days is so grossly inflated visually and so hollow in almost every other way that you feel that a little low-concept tat would be a very good antidote. The film foams at the mouth with ideas but ultimately delivers nothing but mammoth clichés culled from a hundred other movies.

The great thing about Josiane Balasko's **French Twist**, called Gazon Maudit in the original French, is its determination to reach a wide audience with what you might think was awkward subject matter.

Gazon Maudit means cursed lawn — a reference to female genitalia — and this film about lesbianism means, through laughter, to be taken deadly seriously.

The gay stereotype it seeks to demolish is the butch, cigar-smoking Marijo (played by Balasko) who, arriving with a broken-down van at the house of the married Loli (Victoria Abril), isn't much put out when one of the children calls out that there's a man at the door.

Loli is a conventional bourgeois wife and mother, with a pathologically unfaithful husband (Alain Chabat) and a naivety that Marijo finds particularly fetching. The pair strike up a friendship despite the husband's objections, which reach screaming point when he sees his wife's knee being fondled under the table. The wifely worm finally turns when she discovers his affairs. She decides to sleep for three nights with him, three with Marijo and one alone. And she wants a baby.

This might well have become much like a Feydeau farce were it not for Balasko's subtle characterisation and the warmth of her own performance. And Abril, for once eschewing her Spanish sex symbol image, is an excellent foil.

The film is a plea for tolerance through the depiction of a general human absurdity, and on its own level it succeeds very well. It had a triumphant progress round France but let's hope Hollywood doesn't get hold of the plot.



Strange Days indeed . . . Juliette Lewis as Faith, the object of desire in Kathryn Bigelow's frenetic but hollow film

Reserving judgment

EMMA THOMPSON'S adaptation of Sense And Sensibility triumphed at the Berlin Film Festival, *writes Derek Malcolm*. Directed by Ang Lee of Taiwan but with a huge British input, it walked off with the Golden Bear for best film.

The film is officially American because it was backed by Hollywood. It could have been made with European money, but it was felt that US cash would assure it better distribution — a sorry comment on the state of European cinema. The prize was booed by the press as too safe a choice.

Britain's Richard Loncraine shared the director's prize for Richard III with Yim Ho, Chinese director of The Sun Has Ears, which also won the International Critics Award.

The performance prizes went to Sean Penn as the condemned murderer in Tim Robbins's Dead Man Walking — the film most people thought should have won — and to Anouk Grinberg as a prostitute who loves her work in Bertrand Blier's My Man.

There were times when Berlin's 46th festival seemed more Hollywood than Hollywood. John Travolta, star of Get Shorty, arrived by private jet with 12 "professional friends", including hairdresser, make-up artist and bodyguard.

Nikita Mikhalkov, the distinguished Russian film-maker who was head of the jury, described the American product now dominating cinemas in his home country as "the flush of a toilet". It is hardly likely then that he and his fellow jurors would have described Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez's violent From Dusk Till Dawn as fresh water from a silver tap: you just have to sit back and go with the flush.

But away from the glitz, the consistently productive International Forum of Young Films showed one of the festival's finest films: Richard Gordon and Carma Hinton's The Gate Of Heavenly Peace, about the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Birthday salute to a Hungarian master

MUSIC
Andrew Clements

THE HUNGARIAN Gyorgy Kurtág, most private and mysterious of leading living composers, was 70 last month. Celebrations are planned throughout the year, but the London Sinfonietta offered its own well-conceived tribute in the Purcell Room and the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London — a weekend of concerts that included two of Kurtág's masterpieces and a clutch of British premières.

The composer and his wife were scheduled to perform, but failed to make the trip from Vienna. If the enigma of Kurtág was kept intact, the concerts gave shape to his output, and a fierce awareness of its power and uniqueness.

Kurtág's output remains small — he has just reached the magic opus number of 32, and many of those pieces have taken years to complete. He has consistently worked on a small-scale, assembling exquisitely crafted miniatures into larger schemes, whose cumulative effect is immeasurably greater than the sum of their parts. For his emotional range is far from that of a miniaturist; it's hard to think of another major composer of our time whose music contains a greater range of experience and fear.

The event led off with a performance by Valdine Anderson and Thomas Ades of Kurtág's first major score, his concerto for soprano and piano, The Sayings Of Peter Bornemisza, completed in 1968. Saturday evening's concert began with the 1980 Messages Of The Late Miss R V Troussova, one of the milestones in post-war European music, passionately sung by Rosemary Hardy.

The Troussova cycle epitomises Kurtág's greatness; it sets 21 aphoristic texts by the Russian Rimma Dalos in a sequence of surreally intense movements. The world of sound and gesture is utterly distinctive, the instrumental writing full of dark, clangorous effects, the vocal lines vertiginously expressionist.

The tribute ended with the London première of Ruckblick, completed two years ago. It's not really a new work, but Kurtág's recycling of tiny movements from his earlier works, shaped into an hour-long sequence. The substantial novelties of the weekend had come earlier with the British premières of his 1990 Double Concerto for piano and cello, and Grabstein fur Stephan, for guitar and orchestra.

The Double Concerto suggested a new continuity in his music, with two extended movements in which the soloists and their attendant ensembles arrayed around the hall. Grabstein ("Gravestone") also places instruments around the auditorium, while the solo guitar remains the quiet elegiac focus of the music. There is a single terrifying climax, a spasm of violence which unleashes the full force of the spatial brass, and then a quiet, transcendentally beautiful close. It's over in nine minutes; there's hardly another composer working today who could say so much in such a concentrated way.

No mere Shadow

OPERA
Tom Sutcliffe

THE EXISTENCE of the National Lottery certainly gives an extra spin to Stravinsky's moralising opera, The Rake's Progress. With W H Auden and Chester Kallman as librettists, it's no wonder that the Rake does not pursue some great heterosexual love. Instead he seeks those modern chimeras, freedom and social welfare, prompted by his devilish general factotum, Nick Shadow — a role which in this new Welsh National Opera staging by Matthew Warchus can scarcely contain the rich talents of Bryn Terfel.

Terfel has threatened that this may be his last appearance in Wales if the new Cardiff opera house does not go ahead. He certainly casts a giant shadow over this production, both vocally and as an actor.

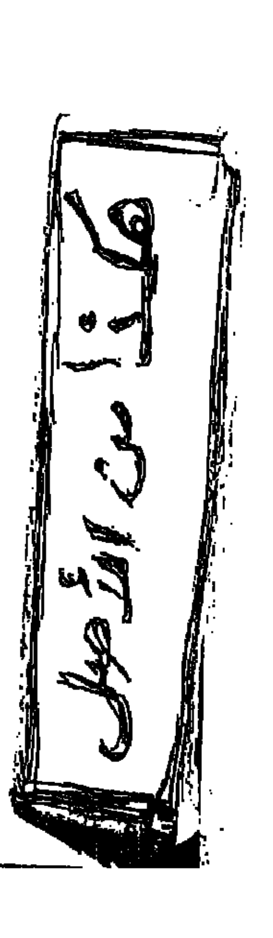
His singing is forceful and snarling almost to the point of contempt for human weakness — and again one is reminded that behind Shadow's bonhomie and wit (according to mythology) lies a resentment specifically for the freedom of action and choice granted to mankind.

Alwyn Mellor rises superbly to the arduous challenge of Anne Truelove, top notes impeccable and phrasing always affectionate and Paul Nilon's intense and focused tenor as the Rake is highly impressive.

There are two problems. The conductor Mark Wigglesworth rejects Stravinsky's Brechtian prescription for the work, and instead often dangerously slows the pace for emotional, subjective effect. Some beauties in the score register finely, but at the expense of coherence. Warchus's attractive staging, tracing the Rake's life through different historical periods up to 1951 (when the opera was premiered), is persuasive but not quite clever enough.

The show looks marvellous and is full of energy, but Warchus and his designers are slightly half-hearted in this dramaturgically irrelevant touch. It's a thin joke to have Tom and Baba the Turk living in Bohemian squalor in Edwardian London.

Warchus opts for a tableau-style narrative method, but behind the formal complexity of Stravinsky's games with operatic and musical history, there is the deep anxiety of the modern age.



Gamble of a lifetime

Alex Brummer

Rogue Trader
by Nick Leeson
Little, Brown 273pp £16.99

The Collapse of Barings
by Stephen Fay
Richard Cohen Books 301pp £20



Nick Leeson: Master of the Universe (retired)

THERE can be absolutely no doubt that the former Barings trader Nick Leeson will prove to have been one of the most brilliant hucksters of all time. Not only was he able to convince the senior management of Britain's oldest merchant bank that he had discovered financial nirvana — the means to make money even when the global markets were moving against him — but for much of the time he was able to fool the Singapore International Monetary Exchange (Simex) and, indirectly, the Bank of England too. While his bosses at Barings were busy in London totting up their potential bonuses on the back of Leeson's Far Eastern exploits, the manipulative trader was busy squirrelling away tens of millions of pounds of losses into his infamous "88888" Error Account.

Even now that he has been exposed as a crook and put away for six years in the notorious Changi prison, the Leesons — Nick and Lisa — continue to finagle. In his self-serving interview with David Frost last year (most of which was left on the cutting-room floor), and now in his ghost-written account of the events which led to the Barings collapse, Leeson seeks to cultivate the image of the wild, happy-go-lucky Watford boy, who was put in, over his head, by his superiors at Barings. He, Leeson, of course, was street smarter than they ever would be and knew exactly how to throw them off the scent. When the internal auditor from London would arrive to ask awkward questions Leeson would gleefully don his striped trader's jacket and conduct a series of dazzling transactions — many of them losing money — with enormous bravado. In his own mind he had become, in Tom Wolfe's memorable phrase, the Master of the Universe, he who could not be challenged. His description of an Essex-Man lifestyle, of partying, mooning, holidaying in the most glitzy resorts, is deliberately designed to convince a tabloid public that, although he may have committed a little fraud along the way, he had achieved a lifestyle to which every lottery winner aspires.

Although he has been the central figure in the Barings affair, it would be a tragedy if Leeson's own crude, at times farcical, self-centred whinge were to be seen as the definitive account of events. The Barings collapse was not about just one individual or even one institution, however privileged a place it may have been. It was more an indictment of the amateurish way in which British merchant banks have chosen to do their business in an unfettered global marketplace, and an exposure of the way in which these markets and their activities have outpaced the ability of regulators to do much about them.

The Barings fiasco shook merchant banking in London to its foundations. As Stephen Fay meticulously details in his volume, The Collapse Of Barings, the failure of the bank which manages the Queen's personal assets was in effect a Waterloo for British banking. It was the point at which both the regulator — the Bank of England — and the great and the good from UK banking came to realise that they were powerless in the face of global forces. The failed attempts by the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street first to bring in the Sultan of Brunel (always the answer to the UK's problems, whether it be the pound or the fate of Asprey's) and then to persuade its counterparts in Japan to close out Leeson's open contracts, were a reflection of a loss of clout. Fay, who wrote an authoritative book on English banking in a previous decade, has grasped this well and takes the reader into the inner sanctum of the Bank of England as it scrambled for solutions during Barings' final weekend last February.

Indeed, no sooner had an overseas financial institution, ING, grabbed the Barings name from the administrators than the larger part of London's merchant banking community also fell to foreign predators. The Barings collapse had opened the floodgates. Barings exposed, for all to see, the dangers of a bonus-led reward system, in which the senior executives would rather put money into gambles in foreign markets than the systems infrastructure which would have allowed executives and bank supervisors in London to monitor on an hourly, on-line basis Leeson's dealings and fiddles.

Leeson may have conducted the rogue operations, but it was negligence of the highest order by his superiors in Singapore and in London, as well as a series of elaborate cover-ups and fabrications, which allowed it to happen. These authors and the official investigators have yet to find the smoking gun which would bring Leeson's senior colleagues, from the officer classes, into the firing line. Denouement cannot be far away.

Fact triumphs over fiction on the shelves

A ***BRITISH HUNGER*** **for self-improvement and knowledge which might help people get jobs has hit three of the staple genres of 20th century fiction — historical romances, romantic novels and adventure stories,** ***writes John Ezard.***

Instead, the sales boom in the 1990s has been in puzzle, quiz and cookery books, with dictionaries holding a high place in the market. These unexpected trends are disclosed by a new survey of the tastes of 1,800 UK book-buyers. The study, Books And The Consumer, shows that between 1989 and 1993 fiction's overall market share slumped from 40 to 30 per cent, with its place largely usurped by reference works.

A fifth of the shoppers studied by the research company Book Marketing Ltd was buying 10 or more puzzle and quiz books every year. The books registered the biggest single gain in market share in 1989-95, from 5.6 per cent to nearly 7 per cent.

"The winners were mainly reference/non-fiction — and the losers mainly fiction," the draft report says. "More people bought a cookery book than any other genre."

BML's research director Leslie Henry said: "People want to know more and to improve themselves. They want the sort of information which will help them get jobs. Since they only have limited time to read books, they have been turning away from fiction. Cookery books have been helped by a huge TV push."

The trend will surprise analysts who see Catherine Cookson and Wilbur Smith still high in the bestseller lists. However, Mr Henry said: "One adventure author like Wilbur Smith may do extraordinarily well, but a lot of others aren't. Historical fiction isn't what today's young are looking for. Soap fans want EastEnders rather than something older."

Sales of romantic fiction have recovered well in the past two years and classics, thanks partly to cut-price editions, sell better than in 1989. But other genres are still sliding. And the survey finds that the demise of the Net Book Agreement last year slowed, rather than boosted, the market.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Citizen Black's encircling demons

Christopher Hitchens

Shades of Black: Conrad Black and the World's Fastest-Growing Press Empire
by Richard Siklos
Heinemann 468pp £20

NOT LONG ago, I was walking with my daughter through Green Park. As we came to the exit by Buckingham Palace, she scampered towards a sculpture and waterfall that had not been there on my last visit. As I approached, I saw that it was a memorial to the Canadian war dead. Running around the plinth was a stone inscription recording the opening of the monument by the Queen Mother — in the presence of Conrad Black and other sponsors.

So here's a new idea for all those flaking cenotaphs in the provinces: get yourself some decent sponsorship. Arras and Dieppe, brought to you by Conrad Black plc. Everything I'd heard about Black, from his edifice complex to his vicarious admiration for soldiers and his general solipsism, seemed to be concentrated in this one lapidary effort.

Then again, as I learn from this respectful new biography, Conrad Black gave a reception for Andy Warhol at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1981, and had one of his early meetings with his wife Barbara Amiel on that occasion. Indeed, "Warhol painted a three-panelled portrait of Black, which hangs in 10 Toronto Street". Warhol loved to do corporate art, but Black himself is never happier than when fulminating against the "nihilism" of the 1960s. We may have a contradiction here. Or, at least, a paradox. Anyone who has heard leading Thatcherites describe themselves as "rebels" and "anti-Establishment" will probably recognise the tone of voice. Someone is intrepidly wanting to have everything both ways. To be a stuffed-shirt pundit with medals and authority, and a bit of a gay boulevardier; to be an intrepid journalist and a hereditary newspaper tycoon; to be a stern defender of Catholicism and family values and to run off with the tempestuous Ms Amiel. Good luck, one wants to say. Just don't take yourself too seriously. But of course the biographer has a different duty. He has to take a long look at the father.

Black's old man was obviously a bit of a gargoyle. He seems to have resembled the sexual and emotional snob and tyrant created by Robertson Davies in his Deptford Trilogy, but to have lacked that character's sense of fun. He sent the boy Conrad to the hell of Upper Canada College, which has long been the cradle of Canada's élite. Siklos's account here does not approach Black's own vivid description in his autobiography, A Life In Progress, where we read descriptions of wanking and spanking that are enough to move the very stars to pity. Tough enough, you may suppose, without Black having to see (and hear) his father either fall or jump from the main staircase into the hall of the family home. And this only a short while after the death of his mother.

A period of "black dog" depression and melancholy ensued, which required careful treatment and which Black spoils (in his own narrative) by grandiose comparisons to the symptoms of Henry VIII or Alexander Borgia.

Siklos describes his subject as "hyperliterate", which may be true in the sense of being well-read and well-informed, but is tragically untrue in the sense of being able to compose anything. Black's book is so agonisingly ill-written that it stirs the same sense of pity.

It's often been remarked of Canadians, and most usually by Canadians, that they have a slight penis-envy both of the British and the Americans. Black, who more or less admits to this, appears to have resolved it by emulating all the most ruthless traits of both. He describes a propaganda trip that he undertook to Vietnam as a young man, there to help stiffen the spine of LBJ. He records, more amusingly than he can guess, the "alarm" that filled the faces of George Bush and Dan Quayle when he proposed deploying the US Marines on the streets of Los Angeles. I have heard more than one British Tory tell similar tales of *farouche* evenings in his company, as he seeks to demonstrate ruthless and unsentimental qualities, or to pose as the last defender of Thomas Carlyle's theory of history.

Which makes a certain moment in Siklos's biography seem almost inevitable. Black's family background was much more a matter of beer and property speculation than of unsound things like newspapers. But, while with a friend in Spain during the 1960s, Conrad began to display unmistakable symptoms: "He had just read the book Citizen Hearst, and it struck me as a very unusual person for Conrad to be fascinated by," his companion recalls. "He'd go on about Hearst and quote him endlessly. I could never understand what is the interest in this guy; I mean, a mere publisher." Once the fit was on him, Black would start making reference to Beaverbrook and Northcliffe, and to read papers only for their advertising (a practice one sometimes wishes that he had not discontinued). There is only one cure for this syndrome, and it is acquisition.

Black: monumental ambitions

In this book, if you care for it, is the account by a highly competent business journalist of an orgiastic process of expansion, at the expense of other members of the "media mogul" bestiary, such as Kerry Packer. The story is a familiar one. What I want to know is: when will Conrad Black build an opera house for Barbara Amiel? I want to be there on the opening night to see that not even this will pacify his demons.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 10 1996

Eggshell fragility

Maggie Gee

The Little Book
by David Hughes
Hutchinson 186pp £9.99

TRAPPED **between discounted bestsellerdom and the deep blue sea of oblivion, the novel is starting to reinvent itself, nowhere more so than in David Hughes's remarkable Little Book.**

Hughes's most famous novel, The Pork Butcher (1984), centred on a fictional character given months to live. Now death has crept closer to home; a few years ago, the writer was himself unexpectedly diagnosed with cancer and, after the removal of one kidney, offered, as he wryly says, "every hope of more months, even a year or two, as many as five". This book tells how Hughes — we are invited to think it's the real David Hughes — faces up to life and death during a summer's convalescence on the Isle of Wight.

He dreams of writing a small, slim book that will hold everything that matters and yet only take an hour to read, a book that will at once be a private love-letter to his wife and a book for everyone, "a book to end books".

Quickly deciding such a book is "unwritable", he nevertheless becomes possessed with the certainty that it already exists somewhere, freshly published, brought into being by each new reader, not a philosophical tract but a journey through "the span and trajectory of life, the wilderness of it, . . . its refusal to be pinned down or fenced in". All our unrealised selves will get a chance to live in The Little Book, ridding us of a dead weight of guilt and regret.

Lost parts of Hughes, split off and named, become characters transformed by reading The Little Book. Jaded literary journalist Hugo Dickinson, for instance, dies of self-disgust after reviewing it inadequately — "tossing lit matches at his fly-blown years of journalism" and burning himself to death. These Audenesque types or humours stand out in brief relief against the gentle watercolour landscapes of the Isle of Wight, where Hughes begins to recover, always aware of "an eggshell fragility in the beauty of an evening, as in a city on the brink of war".

Brave, touching and eloquent, this is a unique work — one that will live.

Comradeship and optimism

Victoria Brittain

Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography
by Joe Slovo
Hodder & Stoughton 253pp £18.99



Enemies of apartheid . . . Nelson Mandela and Joe Slovo

IN THE last few years of his life the public image of Joe Slovo underwent a dramatic transformation, from demonised "KGB colonel" to avuncular pragmatist — safe hands for the non-revolutionary transformation of South Africa. Both myths diminished an extraordinary man: South Africa's most important, and most popular, white leader.

His colleague Thenjiwe Mtintso, in one of the appreciations reprinted in this volume, spoke for a generation of young South African fighters from the townships and the ANC guerrilla camps of Angola who knew the man behind the media distortions, when she said, "My sense of loss of JS began when he became a minister. He started to be taken over . . . our Slovo was being stolen, Slovo the communist, the Slovo of No Middle Road, the Slovo whose articles you hastened to look for in the African Communist . . . and we were also losing the other side of JS, the one of comradeship, of settling down into a flatout session of telling stories and jokes."

Story-telling and jokes were indeed among Joe Slovo's gifts: they were a way of lightening the dark times of defeats and deaths which came with a political choice that was both brave and extremely rare for a white. This unfinished work is his authentic voice, bringing vividly back the Slovo that Thenjiwe Mtintso mourned.

These memoirs are the product of hours speaking into a tape recorder, a project to keep himself going in Mozambique in the months of isolating, wrenching sorrow after the assassination in 1982 of his wife Ruth First, by a letter bomb.

But the time for such a project dwindled as his political responsibilities grew heavier and demanded prolific writing of a less personal nature. Late in 1983, he became chairman of the South African Communist Party. And his time as head of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Siswe, based in Mozambique, from where he planned some of the most daring and successful attacks on the apartheid regime, came to an end when the government there prepared its secret (and fruitless) non-aggression pact with Pretoria, resulting in the expulsion of the ANC.

Deeply disappointed, Slovo moved to Zambia, was elected to the ANC's National Executive Council in 1985 and then became general secretary of the SACP. By virtue of these official positions, Slovo lived constantly under the shadow of possible assassination by the apartheid regime.

Slovo arrived in South Africa in 1936, part of a great East European Jewish influx. Born in 1926, he came from a Yiddish-speaking ghetto in Lithuania to the Johannesburg boarding houses of immigrants who were passionate socialists and, at the same time, "equally passionate Zionists and vicious racists". Brought to a meeting of the Junior Left Book Club by his Irish socialist teacher, Slovo was taken aback to find himself between two black youths — to sit side-by-side with South Africa's majority had until then been outside his experience.

But the Communist Party soon became, and remained, the centre of Slovo's life, and thereafter his world shifted into the black townships. At Witwatersrand University, Slovo the activist got the intellectual training which underpinned his political choice. He is scathing about the university Trotskyists and their immobilising debates. "At Wits I counted among my friends three such characters whose subsequent history fits in well with my prejudices on the subject," he records. One became a large-scale landlord, one a social democrat, and the third attorney-general in Ian Smith's Rhodesia.

He does not spare those who might prefer their past unrecorded and uses an acid tone in his account of the formation of the Pan African Congress in 1959, with its "ill-organised, second-class version of the 1952 Defiance Campaign" which led to the Sharpeville massacre. Slovo records the deep depression of the ANC and Communist Party leadership as they met in secret after Sharpeville "to pick up the pieces".

The months and years which followed were grimmer still, though his account of being jailed during the Emergency in 1960 shows the extraordinary resilience and comradeship which sustained these men in what was then a very lonely struggle. Prison for Slovo was illuminated by the letters he received from Ruth First. They leave an unforgettable impression of the intelligence and integrity which the apartheid regime wanted destroyed.

First's death was merely the worst of many crushing setbacks which Slovo rode out with what he calls, paraphrasing Gramsci, "the triumph of optimism of will over pessimism of intelligence which always sustained me".

Zine of the times

Elizabeth Young

Last Rites and Resurrections
ed Andy Cox
TTA Press 165pp £5.99

The Show-Me State
by Lloyd Rees
Seren 178pp £6.95

The Entertainment Bomb
by Colin Bennett
New Futurist Books 288pp £7.99

QUITE suddenly, in recent years, the long-overdue post-punk putsch seems to have hit Britain's fragmented and terminally frustrated younger writers. As happened in America previously, an increasing number of magazines or fanzines ("zines") have started to circulate informally. Irvine Welsh, whose career is a model of this alternative route, was nurtured by Scottish literary magazine Rebel Ink. Britain is now awash with small zines — Girl Frenzy, Slapper, Pulp Faction, Fatuous Times, Hoax, The Libertine, Squall, Revolting, Kinokazi.

Their uninhibited mixture of graphics, creative work, politics, interviews and rants on pet subjects provide a crash course in everything school missed out: Kenneth Anger, Anton Le Vey, William Burroughs, Dada, the Beats, the Pranksters, Robert Anton Wilson, Situationism, cults, hacking, smart drugs, the Angry Brigade, Herman Nitsch, Joe Coleman, Nick Cave, Lydia Lunch. It's not the national curriculum.

Zines would often like to expand into publishing; one magazine, Purr, has already done so. The 1990s have seen a huge coincident rise in the number of small, independent British presses. The general feeling is that at last something is happening and that would-be-writers are not quite so isolated.

Three small-press books that have appeared recently illustrate the potentials and the pitfalls of publishing original prose. Last Rites And Resurrections is an anthology of stories from "the third alternative" magazine. Editor Andy Cox, in his introduction, speaks for many readers when he talks of "a literary space that had not yet been adequately defined, let alone fully explored . . . this somewhat nebulous area [is] beginning to form into something solid, something that exists in its own right rather than a clutch of random accidents. There was, say, horror fiction and then there was mainstream fiction and yet . . . there was clearly a third alternative."

Alternative fare: Lydia Lunch

Cox is right. Much vibrant recent writing has started as genre — crime, horror, SF — and then transcended the limitations. William Gibson, M John Harrison, Jonathon Carroll are obvious examples. Of Cox's contributors, the title story by Martin Simpson stands out. Apart from the occasional rough patch, it is beautifully modulated. Hick Turnbull's "The Galaxy by Torchlight", although not very original, has moments of lyrical promise. But too many of the stories are inept, derivative and obviously written by sensitive young men searching hopelessly for a beautiful, passive female muse.

It is hard to fathom why a small press (Seren) should have published The Show-Me State by Lloyd Rees. It is a competently written campus farce which could probably have drifted unremarkably through a large publisher's paperback list. Arthur Noone is temporarily at South Missouri University researching American linguistics. Plunged into a steamy, improbable muddle of murder, sex and villainy, he plays the stock role of mild, well-meaning Englishman. Heavy-handed humour — Noone is from Dumpton College; one character is called "Salami", another "Lenore Krappe" — makes one long for David Lodge. Bill Bryson, after all, has provided all that we need of American linguistic weirdness.

Colin Bennett's The Entertainment Bomb (from New Futurist Books, "committed to quality fiction with technological themes and metaphors") seems well nigh unreadable. Despite a respectable first novel, Bennett's limbic system seems to have now gone into neural overload. This futuristic tale introduces junk-food boffin Dr Hieronymous Fields, who proposes founding "Entertainment State", where pleasure means social control, predicated on the worship of popular entertainment figures.

A novel so inextricably wedded to media studies is bound to clone an abomination, stifling the reader in gusty drifts of information about information. Bennett exudes vast cerebral power, and his thesis — that all social infrastructures now tend towards entertainment — is sound. A more robust and technocratic reader, who could stand the sense of being locked and abandoned in a university library, might love it. It is certainly a brave, super-clever and experimental publication — one which fulfils the more positive aspects of small-press freedoms.

Tinkering with time

Colin Luckhurst

DAYLIGHT management was the topic addressed by the winner of the recent private member's bill ballot in the House of Commons. Mr John Butterfill (Conservative, Bournemouth West), wished to extend European time to the UK for the entire year and add to it an additional hour (Double Summer Time).

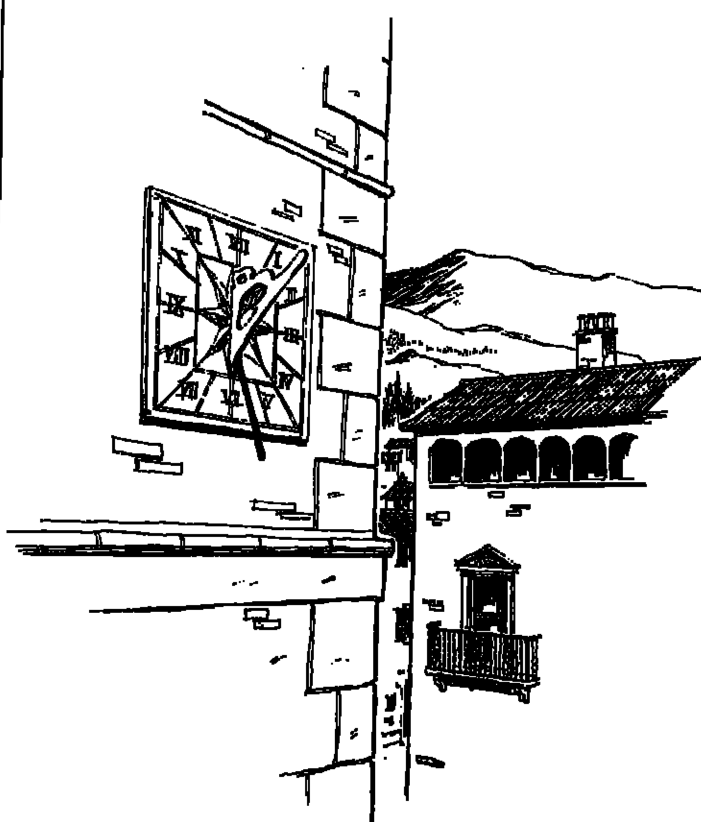
For the winter months this would have meant that Britain was on a common standard with Western Europe. In summer we would have been an hour ahead. The existing hour shifts in spring and autumn already reflect the problems of daylight management and it was bound to be argued that summertime (GMT plus one hour) is enough.

That proved to be the case. Ninety-two votes at the second reading demoted the bill to the bottom of the pile.

The problem comes about through where we lie on the curvature of the Earth — the UK is a long thin country (though not to the extent of Chile or Norway) on a north-south axis. The Shetland Isles, where I lived pre-oil, and mainland Scotland, where I lived for 12 years, are a long way from the south of England (51°N), where the legislators sit.

In mid-winter, from Aberdeen northwards, there is a serious shortage of daylight. Under existing time management, daylight lasts from 9am to 3pm. In Shetland, at 60°N, you can take off half an hour at each end of that short spell. A model of the solar system shows you why — we are in the north quartile of the globe as it spins in relation to the sun. Short winter days, short summer nights, follow inevitably rather than the 12-hour day, 12-hour night of the tropics.

France, to the south, has less of a problem, but devised its own solution. In former centuries it did not really matter that even individual towns kept their own time. International communication open 24 hours changed that for ever. It was when we stopped at high altitude in the village of Angoustrine in the Pyrenees Orientale that I was forced to think about the extent to which French governments have tinkered with daylight saving.


ILLUSTRATION: GEOFF JONES

We parked outside the Mairie and above the door of that historic representation of French local public administration there was a sundial, brightly illuminated on the south facing wall by warm sunlight streaming through the thin mountain air. Most local houses in Angoustrine date to the the late 18th century. The Mairie was typical. As we took our our early lunchtime drink at 12.05pm, the sundial was indicating 10.05am. "That sundial has lost two hours," I observed. And on the basis of the ambient temperature and the heat gradient later in the day — warm enough to swim at 7.45pm but sundown at 8.15pm I thought the French have rather overcooked it.

It's a question of making the best use, in late August, of just less than 13 hours' daylight. When that sundial was erected in 1793 it was acceptable for dusk to fall, even on a sultry August evening at shortly after 6pm. Usable daylight until 9pm suits contemporary life better, so the historic sundials are two hours out. How would you manipulate it?

Would Mr Butterfill's bill have given a better solution than is currently available? His fellow legislators clearly did not think so. Whether you think so will depend on where you live and how you choose to distribute a scarce natural resource-daylight in northern Europe in mid-winter.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Chess Leonard Barden

WILL Garry Kasparov's place in chess history be as the greatest world champion, or just as a landmark in the advance of computers? IBM Deep Blue's 37-move win in Philadelphia last month followed Kasparov's earlier defeats at blitz and rapid chess, and severely damaged the oft-repeated argument that number-crunching machines may be OK at speedy time limits, but cannot comprehend deep humanoid strategy at slower rates. In fact, Deep Blue proved the strategist while Kasparov scrambled around hoping for tactical tricks.

Victory, which had Deep Blue's programmers cheering, clapping and hugging each other, was more than a decade in the making. The prototype Deep Thought, conceived in the mid-eighties, beat GMs of the eminence of Miles and Larsen before IBM added finance and hardware to develop the current super-model which can calculate 200 million positions a second. Yet Kasparov was still expected to score a near wipeout, as Deep Blue's tournament ventures in the past three years disappointed and it even failed to win the all-computer world title.

Many believe that computers would be stronger still if programming teams did not consist solely of software specialists, and in this case a human GM may have added vital input. GM Joel Benjamin from the US world championship gold medal squad worked with the IBM team on the final preparation.

IBM Deep Blue-Kasparov, 1st game

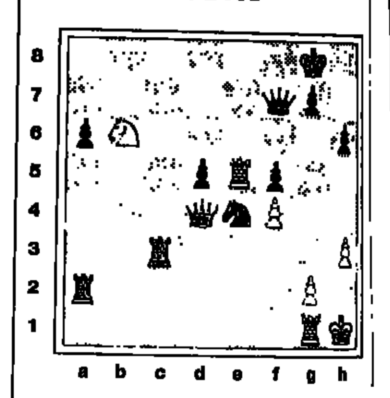
1 e4 c5 2 c3 A shrewd start, avoiding Kasparov's formidable book knowledge of 2 Nf3 and 3 d4. **d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 Bg4 6 Be2 e6 7 h3 Bh5 8 0-0 Nc6 9 Be3 cxd4 10 cxd4 Bb4 11 a3 Ba5 12 Nc3 Qd6 13 Nb5** This tricky move caused Kasparov to think for half an hour. In the third game of the series Deep Blue avoided 7 h3 Bh5 and chose the simpler 12 Ne5.

Qe7?! Qb8 is more natural. **14 Ne5 Bxe2 15 Qxe2 0-0 16 Rac1 Rac8 17 Bg5 Bb6 18 Bxf6 gxf6** Qxf6 fails to 19 Nd7, but Black hopes to pile up pieces against the d4 pawn.

19 Nc4 Rfd8 20 Nxb6 axb6 21 Rfd1 f5 22 Qe3 Qf6 23 d5! Now all Black's pawns become isolated or doubled. **Rxd5 24 Rxd5 exd5 25 b3 Kh8** With his pawn structure compromised, Kasparov tries a desperate attack. If Qe6 26 Qxb6 Ne5 27 Rxc8+ Qxc8 28 Qc7! with a won knight endgame.

26 Qxb6 Rg8 27 Qc5 d4 28 Nd6 f4 29 Nxb7 Ne5 30 Qd5! Centralised pieces defeat unsound flank attacks. **f3 31 g3 Nd3 32 Rc7 Re8 33 Nd6 Re1+ 34 Kh2 Nxf2 35 Nxf7+ Kg7 36 Ng5+ Kh6 37 Rxh7+ Resigns.** If Kg6 38 Qg8+ Kf5 39 Nxf3. (Kasparov later recovered and won the match 4-2.)

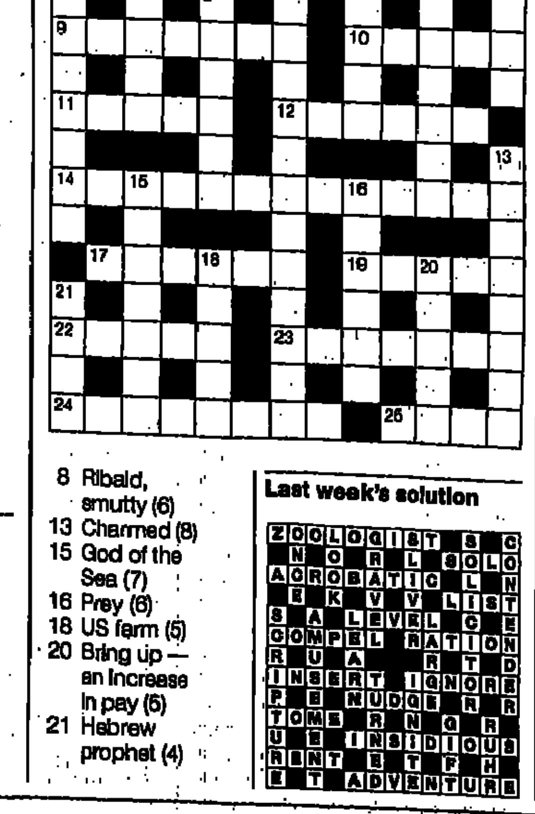
No 2411



Larsen v Najdorf, Lugano 1968. Black (to play) is two pawns up, but White threatens Rxe4 or taking on d5. How should the game go?

No 2410: 1 Qa7. If Kf3 2 Qa1 Kg2 (Ke2 3 Qd1 or Kf4 3 Qf6) 3 Qh1. If 1 ... Kf5 2 Qg7 Kf4 3 Qf6. If 1 ... Kg5 2 Qf7 Kh4 (Kh6 3 Be3) 3 Bd8. If 1 ... Ke5 2 Qf7 Kd6 3 Qe6.

Quick crossword no. 304



Across

1 Peak (4)
3 Strong liking for (8)
9 Boisterous (7)
10 Pointed at (5)
11 Municipal corporation head (5)
12 Widespread protest (6)
14 Edward Lear's speciality (8,5)
17 Disciplined Greek city (6)
19 Ionian island (5)
22 Lament (5)
23 First (7)
24 Boiling (8)
25 Germ — source (4)

Down

1 Bitterness (8)
2 Temperamental (5)
4 London rail terminal (6,7)
5 Cunning — vessels (5)
6 Lover (7)
7 Neat (4)
8 Ribald, smutty (6)
13 Charmed (8)
15 God of the Sea (7)
16 Prey (6)
18 US farm (5)
20 Bring up — an increase in pay (6)
21 Hebrew prophet (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

IN THE days before Sputniks, doubles were purely and simply for blood, and the depressing experience that befell Michael Rosenberg on this deal could never have happened. The scene was the Cap Volmac tournament in the Netherlands, which with the Macallan in London and the Politiken in Denmark makes up a trio of top-class European pairs tournaments. Rosenberg held these South cards at game all:

♠A109863 ♥K ♦J752 ♣73

His left-hand opponent, ladies' world champion Daniela von Arnim, passed. His partner, one Z Mahmood, opened the bidding with one club, and Sabine Auken on his right overcalled with one spade! Thirty years ago, Michael could have stood on his chair and doubled for penalties. But these days, a double of an overcall is primarily for takeout: with a hand like Michael's, you just have to pass and hope your partner will re-open the bidding with a takeout double of his own. So Michael passed and waited for me to do the decent thing. This was my hand as North:

♠None ♥QJ65 ♦K986 ♣KQ985

North
♠ None
♥ QJ65
♦ K986
♣ KQ985

West
♠ Q4
♥ A10843
♦ 1043
♣ 1042

East
♠ KJ752
♥ 972
♦ AQ
♣ AJ6

South
♠ A109863
♥ K
♦ J752
♣ 73

South	West	North	East
R'berg	Arnim	Zia	Auken
	No	1♣	1♠
No	No	2♣	No
No	Dble	No	No
2♠	No	No	Dble
No	No	No	

When Sabine's one spade overcall was passed round to me, I could be pretty certain that my partner held a fistful of spades and was praying that I would double. But I was not at all keen to oblige him. Often you need to be able to lead a trump through declarer's hand in this kind of position, and I didn't have one to lead. Besides, I had no sure defensive trick against a spade contract, and Michael would be relying on me for a trick or two since I had opened the bidding. I could, and probably should, have chosen to pass, but that risked missing a vulnerable game if my partner had a lot of points as well as a lot of spades. I'm not proud of my decision to re-open with two clubs, but it's part of the price you pay for playing negative doubles in the modern style.

Poor Michael, who had been looking forward to a juicy penalty from one spade doubled, suddenly found himself in the middle of a nightmare auction, for this was the full hand (centre). When my bid of two clubs was passed round to Daniela von Arnim, she doubled it for takeout, but Auken was happy to pass for penalties. Now Rosenberg had to beat an undignified retreat to the opponents' suit, so that instead of defending one spade doubled he ended up as declarer in two spades doubled! He did pretty well to hold his losses to 500 points — and of course I had to apologise, since if I'd doubled one spade and he had left it in, as was his intention, we'd have conceded only 160. One of these days, I'll learn not to open the bidding with a hand like North's. ©

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 10 1996

Football Premiership: Newcastle United 0 Manchester United 1

Cantona turns the screw

David Lacey

SUDDENLY for Newcastle United the winning post is clouded in self-doubt, and even a few hearty renderings of the Blaydon Races at St James' Park on Monday night could not hide the fact. Right on cue, Manchester United ended Newcastle's run of 13 successive home wins in the league to reduce their lead at the top of the Premiership to one point. Not so long ago it was nine.

A goal from Eric Cantona early in the second half utterly transformed a match Newcastle had promised to win by several furlongs. Before half-time Manchester United had simply hung on and hoped, but having taken the lead they dominated the game with a confidence born of eight successive victories.

The psychological effect on Newcastle of this defeat is unfathomable. They may take a long time wondering how they could lose a game which for most of the first half appeared theirs for the winning.

Yet the answers are simple. Superbly though Schmeichel kept goal, he would surely have been beaten by an on-form, on-target Ferdinand. But Ferdinand's finishing has lost some of its incisiveness, and the longer the game lasted the more this showed.

"Up to half-time you saw the best team in the country," said Kevin Keegan afterwards. But the reality was that Asprilla faded after a marvellous 20 minutes and only Ginola consistently turned the Manchester United flanks thereafter.

Moreover, having conceded a goal Newcastle, all too aware of the opposition's speed and power on the break, withdrew into a shell.

Overall Bruce was Manchester United's heroic figure. Deprived of Pallister's company by a recurrence of a back problem, he often had to cope with the airborne threat of Ferdinand on his own.

But Manchester United had Schmeichel to thank for not going two down in the opening four minutes. Asprilla twice sent Ferdinand clear of the last defender but each time Schmeichel denied him.

Yet only luck saved Manchester United after 21 minutes. Albert's 20-metre free-kick rebounded from the crossbar, Keane failed to clear the rebound, and after Asprilla had glanced the ball into the goalmouth Ferdinand wafted it into the stands.

"I couldn't wait for half-time to come," said Alex Ferguson, and it was obvious why. His team achieved more in the opening three minutes of the second half than they had done in the previous 45, and a goal was not far away.

It came after 51 minutes when Cole saw off several challenges before working the ball out to Phil Neville, whose cross found Cantona at the far post with time and space to drive the ball past Srnicek.

"We were much more like ourselves in the second half," said Ferguson, "but it's still going to be a close race, that's for sure." Keegan now has to instil fresh horse sense into his thoroughbreds. By the end of Monday night's match Newcastle were in danger of going lame.

Breakthrough . . . Cantona, scorer of Manchester United's winner, waltzes through the Newcastle defence PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

Cricket World Cup

Beaten by part-timers? We deserved it

Kenya 166, West Indies 93. TV newscaster **Trevor McDonald** on a day of humiliation for West Indies



THE real shock is that the Kenyans were the ones to do it. But that the West Indies were humiliated by a team of enthusiastic part-timers at Pune last week should have come as no great surprise.

The decline of West Indies cricket has been gradual but inexorable. For some time now it's been slipping from its once Olympian invincibility into the shadows of national disgrace. This is widely known in the Caribbean, but the administrators of the game there appear to have neither the power nor the resolution to arrest the slide.

The West Indies were extremely fortunate to escape with a drawn series in England last summer. For that, as usual, they can partly thank England, because long before they arrived here, beaten by the Australians, the team was a seething cauldron of controversy, dissent and bickering on a scale almost unknown even in the perennially fractious atmosphere of the West Indies game. The biggest casualty was team spirit.

It probably began with an issue that the Kenyans may have unwittingly resolved — Richie Richardson's captaincy. Having returned to lead the team after a long absence through ill health, it was widely felt in the ranks that he was no longer capable of doing the job. His own batting had fallen away, but more to the point there was open dissatisfaction about the manner in which he was leading the side. Prominent among the dissenters were the fast bowlers, who felt their efforts weren't ever properly matched by astute leadership on the field.

There were complaints by some players that pre-match strategy meetings, which Clive Lloyd and Vivian Richards employed to develop and preserve the culture of success, had become a pale imitation of themselves, where they had not disappeared altogether. As a result there was constant speculation and there were rows about team selection. It was frequently difficult to decide who might be chosen to open the batting, such was the disarray. Things became so bad that Brian Lara, the team's undoubted batting star, had to be persuaded not to leave.

Of course in a way, he later did, when he refused to join the tour after the one in England. Last December in the West Indies I watched with mounting incredulity as almost all the community and political resources in the region were deployed to coax Lara back to the team. It was a singularly unappealing sight. No one blames Lara entirely. He has probably suffered most from the team's rank indiscipline. But the spectacle of one player appearing to hold the West Indian game to ransom was deplorable as it was tragic, and would probably happen nowhere else.

For that the West Indian administrators must shoulder the blame. The West Indies is probably the only professional international cricket team to believe it can function without a full-time coach. The West Indian islands must stop fighting among themselves about team selection; the Board should sack the captain, appoint a full-time coach and tell their players they must represent the interests of the team or get out.

Other matches

Australia (258) beat India by 16 runs in Bombay; Kenya (134) lost to Zimbabwe by five wickets at Patna; New Zealand (276-8) beat United Arab Emirates by 109 runs at Faisalabad; Pakistan (242-6) lost to South Africa by five wickets in Karachi; Zimbabwe (154) went down to Australia by eight wickets at Nagpur; Holland (216-9) were routed by UAE by seven wickets in Lahore; India (271-3) lost to Sri Lanka by six wickets in Delhi; England (249-9) lost to Pakistan by seven wickets in Karachi; Australia (229-6) were beaten by West Indies by four wickets at Jaipur.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Vision on a double

LEEDS captain Gary McAllister kept his team's hopes of a double appearance at Wembley this season alive by scoring two goals to beat First Division Port Vale 2-1 in the FA Cup fifth-round replay. Tony Naylor put Port Vale ahead towards the end of the first half but McAllister equalised in the 64th minute and got the winning goal just two minutes from time.

In the quarter-finals, Leeds will meet Liverpool who triumphed over the First Division high-fliers Charlton 2-1, Liverpool's goals coming from Stan Collymore and Robbie Fowler. Charlton's substitute Kim Grant got his side's goal three minutes from time. Two goals from Jon Goodman at Selhurst Park handed Wimbledon a 3-1 replay victory over Huddersfield Town and a quarter-final trip to Chelsea, who overwhelmed Grimsby 4-1 in their replay. Southampton defeated Swindon 2-0 in their replay to book their place in the last eight. The match between Nottingham Forest and Tottenham Hotspur ended in a 2-2 draw.

LIVERPOOL legend Ian Rush is to leave Anfield at the end of the season. The 34-year-old footballer, widely acknowledged as the finest striker of his generation with a career goal tally of 404, will be allowed to leave the club on a free transfer. The Welsh international has enjoyed a remarkable 16 years with Liverpool, but has been unable to regain a place after cartilage surgery late last year. Among the clubs interested in him are Leeds, Celtic, Manchester City, Middlesbrough, Sheffield United and Sunderland.

COLOMBIA and Newcastle striker Faustino Asprilla and Keith Curle of Manchester City have been charged with misconduct over ugly incidents during their teams' stormy 3-3 draw in the Premiership at Maine Road last month. Asprilla faces two counts and the City captain one following a Football Association investigation into the flare-ups. Both have been given 14 days to respond.

THE season's most drawn-out divorce was finally resolved when David Batty left Blackburn for Newcastle in a £3.75 million transfer. North of the border, Rangers completed the signing of the Danish striker Erik Bo Andersen from Aalborg for £1.5 million.

BRITAIN'S Nigel Benn lost his WBC super-middleweight crown to South African Thulane "Sugar Boy" Malinga at Newcastle Arena. Benn — known as the Dark Destroyer for his record of 42 victories and one draw in his 46-bout career — had a badly swollen eye in the fourth round and although he knocked down Malinga in the next one, the title holder was always second best. He fought bravely until the end but finally lost his tenth title defence on a split points decision.

GREG NORMAN won the Doral Ryder Open title in Miami for the third time on Sunday. The Australian finished the event with a final-round 66 for a 19-under-par total of 269, to win by two shots from Michael Bradley and Vijay Singh. He received $324,000 for his effort and now, with $9,936,829, needs only one more decent finish to top the $10 million career-money mark.

Meanwhile, Scottish golfer Paul Lawrie finally won his first European Tour title after an agonising wait as his rivals in the Catalan Open challenged the score he set up at Tarragona last Saturday. High winds forced the event to be reduced to 36 holes and Lawrie completed his second round with a total of nine under par 135. He won by one stroke from Spain's Fernando Roca.

THE International Hockey Federation threw out Canada's claim that India and Malaysia fixed their 0-0 draw at the Olympic qualifying tournament in Barcelona earlier this year. It ruled that there was "insufficient evidence". The draw meant the Malaysians took the final Olympic place at Canada's expense.

SURREY have won the battle to sign South African all-rounder Brian McMillan. The club have given him a two-year contract, believed to be worth £100,000. McMillan, with a batting average of 42 from 23 Tests and 60 wickets in bowling at an average of 29.81, is the second coup for the club, who late last month appointed the former Australian Test bowler Dave Gilbert as their cricket manager.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Coventry 2, West Ham 2; Leeds 0, Bolton 1; Liverpool 3, Aston Villa 0; Man City 1, Blackburn 1; Middlesbrough 0, Everton 2; Newcastle 0, Man Utd 1; QPR 1, Arsenal 1; Sheff Wed 1, Nottm Forest 3; Tottenham 1, Southampton 0; Wimbledon 1, Chelsea 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Newcastle (played 28, points 61); 2, Man Utd (29-60); 3, Liverpool (28-55).

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE: First Division Birmingham 0, Sheff Utd 1; Derby 3, Huddersfield 2; Grimsby 0, Sunderland 4; Ipswich 4, Leicester 2; Luton 0, C Palace 0; Millwall 0, Wolverhampton 1; Oldham 1, Tranmere 3; Portsmouth 2, Charlton 1; Reading 0, Watford 0; Southend 1, Norwich 1; Stoke 2, Barnsley 0; West Brom 1, Port Vale 1 **Leading positions:** 1, Derby (34-63); 2, Sunderland (33-57); 3, Charlton (32-52).

Second Division: Bournemouth 0, Oxford Utd 1; Bradford C 2, York 2; Brighton 0, Brentford 0; Bristol Rovers 2, Shrewsbury 1; Burnley 0, Blackpool 1; Carlisle 0, Stockport 1; Notts Co 1, Hull 0; Peterborough 0, Chesterfield 1; Swansea 2, Bristol City 1; Walsall 3, Rotherham 1; Wrexham 2, Crewe 3; Wycombe 1, Swindon 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Swindon (30-63); 2, Blackpool (33-61); 3, Crewe (31-60).

Third Division: Bury 3, Scunthorpe 0; Chester 4, Cardiff 0; Doncaster 1, Darlington 2; Fulham 1, Lincoln 2; Hereford 1, Northampton 0; L Orient 0, Colchester 1; Mansfield 2, Barnet 1; Plymouth 1, Gillingham 0; Preston 1, Rochdale 2; Scarborough 1, Hartlepool 2; Torquay 0, Exeter 2; Wigan 3, Cambridge Utd 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Gillingham (33-61); 2, Preston (32-58); 3, Darlington (33-54).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Aberdeen 3, Kilmarnock 0; Celtic 4, Hearts 0; Hibernian 0, Rangers 2, Motherwell 1, Falkirk 0; Partick 0, Raith 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (28-68); 2, Celtic (28-65); 3, Aberdeen (28-43)

SCOTTISH LEAGUE: First Division: Airdrie 1, Dundee Utd 1; Clydebank 1, St Johnstone 2; Dundee 3, Dumbarton 0; Dunfermline 4, Greenock Morton 1; St Mirren 0, Hamilton 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Dunfermline (25-51); 2, Dundee Utd (26-51); 3, St Johnstone (28-48).

Second Division: Ayr 5, Berwick 0; Forfar 3, Stenhousemuir 1; Queen of South 2, Clyde 1; Stirling 2, East Fife 2; Stranraer 1, Montrose 2 **Leading positions:** 1, Stirling (27-59); 2, East Fife (27-53); 3, Berwick (27-41).

Third Division: Albion 1, Arbroath 1; Cowdenbeath 3, Alloa 0, E Stirling 2, Brechin 0; Livingston 2, Caledonian Thistle 2; Queen's Park 0, Ross 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Livingston (27-51); 2, Brechin (27-47); 3, Caledonian Thistle (26-44).

